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THE OUTLOOK FOR RELIGION

GEORGE RICHMOND GROSE



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The Outlook for Religion

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The Outlook for Religion

I

The Present Standing of Faith

WHAT is the outlook for faith? The impression has gone abroad that the Christian faith has lost something of its former standing, that many of the beliefs of the Church are not tenable, that the Bible has been discredited, and that the teachings of the Church are not worthy the consideration given them by the fathers. The result is that many men are giving little earnest thought to the things of the spirit. Hence this inquiry is of first importance: What is the present standing of faith? Have the teachings of revealed religion been discredited by the discoveries of modern science? Can religious truth claim a place with scientific truth? Are the essentials of the Christian faith jeopardized by the findings of physical science and by the literary and historical study of the Scriptures?

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These are questions of absorbing interest to all thoughtful minds to-day. To them we hear varying answers.

One man is in blind confusion; he does not know what to think about religious matters. He says despairingly, "I do not know what I believe." He hears of the conflicting religious beliefs and of the modifications of the old doctrines of the Church. He is not able to discover the significance of the present restlessness, but concludes that it must mean something serious to faith.

Another is agnostic in his attitude. He says: "Nothing can be known concerning the things of religion. There is, therefore, no profit in troubling one's self about God, and the forgiveness of sins, and the immortality of the soul. These are mysteries beyond any reliable knowledge."

Still another is skeptical through a superficial intellectualism. He has lost his faith through the alleged teachings of science. He hears that the Book of Genesis is shown to be untrue by the teachings of geology, that physical science has discredited the miracles, that evolution has

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driven Christianity from the field, and that the Church is rapidly becoming an obsolete institution. The average man takes much of his belief or unbelief from the magazine philosopher and the platform lecturer.

A fourth man refuses to treat seriously these questions. To him it seems irreverent even to reason with doubt. He places every inquiry under the ban of unbelief. He fears that the Christian faith may be imperiled by investigation. This man is in a state of mental panic. He has been nurtured in the Christian faith; he wants to believe the doctrines of religion, but is afraid that higher criticism may undermine the Bible, and that the teachings of science will discredit the claims of Jesus Christ, and that the Christian faith may perish from the earth.

But there is still another type of doubt which is more widespread and far more alarming than these cited above. That is a sort of practical atheism. It is a moral apostasy, which has come through the eclipse of a living faith in God. It does not deny God intellectually, but, like the fool in the Scriptures, it says in

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its heart, "There is no God." It treats God and all the spiritual interests of life with utter indifference. Whether it takes the form of brutal commercialism, or sensuous pleasure-seeking, or æsthetic culture for its own sake, it completely ignores God in the living of life. This stolid indifference is more alarming than the vehement and blasphemous infidelity of an earlier day. The present generation, in large numbers, lacks conviction enough to believe or to disbelieve. It simply does not care. It treats religion as something not worth while. And the fact that many of our people pay no heed to religion at all is the great peril of the present day.

Now there can be no question that ours is a time of mental confusion and religious unrest. And this is not strange. The past century has contributed so many surprising discoveries, so many startling inventions, and so many new interpretations, that the average mind is not yet adjusted to the new and larger world. The result is widespread mental bewilderment. It is impossible that the religious mind should escape the perplexity and confusion incident to

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these revolutionary changes. In the midst, then, of the arrogant claims of the materialist and the agnostic in the name of science, and of the mental uncertainty and religious unrest of many believers, and of the stolid indifference to the moralities and spiritualities of a great multitude, we need to consider the present-day standing of faith.

What are the signs of the times? Is faith in the Son of God becoming more and more a living reality and a growing power in human life; or has the Christian faith lost intellectual standing and vital grip on the consciences of men? There is to-day a strange commingling of faith and doubt. There appeared a few years ago a book by Henry Van Dyke, entitled "The Gospel for An Age of Doubt," in which the writer described the signs of unbelief in our time. A little later there appeared in the Lowell Course of Lectures a book entitled "The New Epoch for Faith," by George A. Gordon, in which the author shows unmistakable signs of the return to faith, like an incoming tide. Both writers are true to the facts of life.

It is easy to characterize the present time

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with a sweeping generalization, such as a "commercial age," or a "materialistic age," or an "age of doubt," or an "era of faith;" but such characterizations are little more than abstractions. To say that this is an age of doubt means nothing more than that the prevailing tendency of thought is toward unbelief. On the other hand, to say that ours is an era of faith means that there is an increasing drift of thought and activity toward the things of the spirit. Neither faith nor doubt so completely dominates in any period of history as to warrant these wholesale characterizations. To remember this will help to save us, both from the folly of a "cuckoo optimism" and the despair of an "owlish pessimism." But there are certain clearly-defined and deep-seated tendencies of life which we do well to note.

First, there is a change in the temper of belief and doubt. The crude infidelity of earlier times has passed. The doubt which springs out of a thorough-going, materialistic view of life is rapidly passing. The doubt of the present day is of a different sort. It questions the reality of religion in human experience, the power of

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prayer, and the possibility of knowing God. It is less boastful and flippant than the doubt of a generation ago. The doubt of our time, for the most part, is profoundly serious and reverent. There is in much modern doubt, instead of boastful pride, an awful pang. Faith, in like manner, is not contending for petty details, but for the things which are vital to higher living. It holds rather to the few great essentials of religion which may be tested in the experience of the individual. Some of the serious doubt of to-day is to be found within the Church; and some of the strong faith is to be found outside the Church.

Second, it is evident that traditional beliefs are losing their hold upon men's minds. The basis of religious authority and the ground of religious appeal have shifted. The modern conscience is seldom stirred by appeals to the doctrines of the Church on the authority of the fathers. Men do not fear the anathemas of popes and the censure of Church councils as they once did. The appeal to faith based on external authority is no longer effective. The final truth-test is not, "Is this teaching ortho-

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dox, or Methodistic, or Presbyterian?" but, "Is it true? Can its truth be verified in concrete, personal experience?" But while many care little for dogmatic religion and for the conventional forms of faith, they are earnestly asking how the great life needs can be met. The unsatisfied religious aspirations of great multitudes of people to-day is none the less a fact than the widespread religious indifference. There is growing indifference to the non-essentials in religion, but there is evidence that thoughtful men care for the truth, for duty, and for the spiritual interests of life with a deep concern. Even though some of the external forms of faith may be slipping away, the earnest-minded are clinging to the fundamental truths of Christianity, because they inspire faith, and give moral courage, and hold up worthy ideals for noble living.

The causes underlying the religious situation of our time are many. But they are at bottom one: It is man's effort to adjust himself to the larger world, to the roomier universe into which scientific discovery has led him. The telescope has revealed the fact that our planet is not in

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the center of the universe, but is on the very outskirts of God's creation. The bounds of human history have been pushed back to a remote time. Many of the discoveries of modern science have revolutionized men's thinking. As Professor Wallace tells us in his story of the achievements of the nineteenth century, the last century has contributed double the number of great discoveries contributed by all previous centuries together. Now, is it strange that faith should be disturbed in finding man's place in this bigger world and in readjusting itself to the new discoveries? The fact is that men have been so carried away with their discoveries and the fortunes of invention, that the things of the spirit have been neglected. We have been so occupied in mastering science, that science in the last half century has mastered us. The spiritualities have been smothered by the materialities of life. For twenty years "evolution was an intellectual fad." Natural law was a god, before which the scholars bowed down to worship. So absorbed did men become in things that they forgot the claims of the unseen. And this intoxication with things—to know

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things, to master things, to possess things—is the chief reason for the doubt of our day.

But already a reaction has set in. The moral and religious needs of men are asserting themselves. The immortal spirit can not be satisfied with things. The soul of man is thirsting for the living God, and the result is an increasing tide of faith.

Religion can no longer be regarded as a creation of childish fancy or a flight of the disordered imagination. Whenever man undertakes to find the soul and meaning of life he discovers that religion is his indispensable helper. “Consequently, after a long brow-beaten period, there rises once more an aspiration after eternal truth and infinite love.” In the midst of all the welter of our day a rising tide of spiritual awakening appears that heralds the coming of a better day.

What are the signs of the return to faith? First, the science of our day is recognizing the fact of religion as one of the facts of life that must be reckoned with. The master intellects of the present generation are on the side of the Christian faith. The two greatest poets of the

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nineteenth century—Browning and Tennyson—“strike a clear note of returning faith and hope.” A student of modern philosophy, in a recent article, says: “The era of doubt is drawing to a close.” Three of the most eminent scholars of Harvard University of the past decade, one a philosopher, the other a psychologist, the other a geologist, began their careers as materialists or agnostics, but before the close of the century were avowed Christian theists. Huxley, one of the most interesting of nineteenth century men, a fierce fighter for agnosticism, comes at last to listen patiently to the hypothetical plea, “If there be no meeting place beyond the grave.” A generation ago the majority of men of the medical profession educated in Europe were agnostic; the exact opposite is true to-day. Fifty years ago the drift of philosophic thought in the universities of Europe and America was toward the side of unbelief; to-day the great leaders in education and the large majority of the student body are Christian believers. John Stuart Mill, brought up without religion, declaring again and again that he felt no need of religion, in many pages of his autobi-

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ography attests not only his need, but also his endeavor to find a religion. The case of George C. Romanes is most significant. He began his academic career as an atheist. Perhaps the strongest argument ever written against the existence of God was written by this man. But in the last few years of his life he came back to an unshaken faith, and died in the communion of the Church of England. Professor Tait, another eminent scientist, wrote an article not long before his death, in which he declared there is not one skeptic among the greatest men of science to-day, calling the list of scientists one by one. A few years ago, in London, Lord Kelvin declared in the face of the whole scientific world that it is all nonsense to say that science has either disproved or thrown any doubt upon divine creative power and energy. On the other hand, science proves the existence of creative power and energy.

At the close of an address to the students of Johns Hopkins University, in which the writer was discussing this subject, President Remsen said, with great earnestness: "I think I have some right to speak on this question, having

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devoted my life to the study of science. And I say to you the most scientific life that I know is the Christian life.”

Now I have cited these instances at some length, in order to make clear the fact that the teachings of science, in the thought of the masters, have not discredited the Christian faith. While science makes no direct contribution to the truth of religion, its indirect evidence is of great value. Science has strengthened vastly our belief in the reality of human destiny. We can not but believe that the physical world means something, and that “this meaning somehow culminates in man.” Furthermore, the scientific passion for truth at all hazards has caused no little confusion for a time in the temple of religion; but when the Bible is re-read in the light of modern learning, and the facts of Christian experience are reinterpreted, the foundation of God still stands firm. The scientific method has brought forth no facts which discredit faith intellectually. It must also never be forgotten that the scientific spirit is a valuable ally of the Christian faith. Instead of the growth of knowledge making faith either

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insecure or unnecessary, it is preparing the way of the Lord. When we accept the latest discovery of science and the last word of philosophy upon the problem of life, we can still be Christians.

If we appeal to the leading philosophers of the present generation with our inquiry, "What is the standing of faith?" the answers are still more assuring. Borden P. Bowne for a quarter of a century, with rare brilliancy of thought and profound spiritual insight, bears witness to the *rationale* of faith and the supremacy of Jesus Christ; William James insists upon the reality of religious phenomena; Rudolph Eucken maintains that down deep in the intellect of man and in his own soul there is a life religious; and Henri Bergsen, in his "Creative Evolution," pleads with the present age to recognize the primacy of the soul. These and many other master minds of the present generation proclaim "The morning cometh." The light of a new and redemptive day is already on the hills, giving promise

"That at the next white corner of the road
My eyes may look on Him."

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The dominant philosophy of to-day is assuring us, with increasing clearness and vigor, that the only solution of the problem of life is through an alliance with religion.

But even more convincing than the drift of modern scholarship toward faith is the evidence which comes from an appeal to life itself. Life must be lived. And life, strong, wholesome, courageous, helpful life, can not be lived on the basis of thorough-going doubt. I am a man. And when my body is fed and clothed and housed, and my mind stored with facts, my wants are not all met. My heart needs faith and hope and love. Without these my life begins in weakness, faces struggle and storm without strength, and ends in despair. With all our knowledge of the processes and laws of life to-day, science gives no answer to the great questions of the soul—Whence? Whither? Why? Science tells us how the world was made; religion must tell us what it was made for. Science gives us the laws of life; religion must tell us of the beginning and destiny of life. There ought to be no quarrel between science and religion. No more ought the eye and the telescope to

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quarrel. Faith and reason are never contradictory. Faith supplements reason. It answers the cry of the heart and the rational demand for meaning and purpose and love in life.

The return to faith comes out of a new sense of the preciousness of life. Life ultimately determines reality. Life, with its thousand needs claiming satisfaction, makes for the conviction that whatever supports life is true. There is to-day a mighty movement of intellectual awakening and moral enthusiasm and self-sacrifice for the service of men. It is the inspiration and the product of the Christian faith. Take faith in God and in goodness out of men's lives, and you wreck the whole structure of human society. There can be no well-ordered society, no good government, no broad education, no high moral living, if men cease to have the inspiration, the restraint, and the comfort of the Christian faith.

The fact of the spiritual life, and the aspiration after a religion of the spiritual life, are becoming more and more recognized. There is such a thing as concrete religious experience, and this concrete religious experience is the authoritative guarantor of the truth of religion.

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In human experience there is such a thing as faith, that gives reality to the physically unseen, that "stops the mouths of lions, that turns to flight armies of aliens;" there is a love that "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" there is such a thing as the emergence from the life of the senses into the new life of the spirit. Now, however mistaken or inadequate may be our conception and statement of this truth, still the foundation of God rests on this concrete fact of soul-experience. Whatever new difficulties may present themselves to the faith of the future, this much is certain: that the only hope of preventing the coming of an "old age upon humanity," is to draw "new energies and depths of the spiritual life into the domain of man." The present situation is difficult and full of dangers; but so long as the Christian faith meets the "inner necessities of the spiritual life within the soul of man," so long our holy faith stands secure. If traditional orthodoxy can no longer hold its own, it is equally certain that a soulless, rationalistic culture can not claim the day. The insatiable human soul ceaselessly

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cries out for the living God. A new valuation is being put upon religion by the sheer necessities of the life which is to be lived here and now. In the striking phrase of Professor Rudolph Eucken, there is something "driving men to-day back to religion;" and that "something" is the inborn spiritual nature of man. It is the upward and Godward push of his divine inheritance as a child of the Infinite. Furthermore, the very complexity of our modern life is producing an increasing dissatisfaction with a civilization which centers in self and in the world; and this growing dissatisfaction and spiritual yearning are driving men back to religion. There is a voice within, which is crying ceaselessly, "Man can not live by bread alone." This fact rediscovers to us in the twentieth century the primacy of the human soul, which Jesus declared in the first century, "What is man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

So the true value of religion is being appreciated as never before. When has there been a period in which the dominant philosophic thought has joined with the religious aspira-

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tions of the multitudes and with the redemptive experience of the men of faith in attesting the truth of religion? It is this concurrent testimony to spiritual reality that is giving to religion a new standing to-day, and holding the promise of a "new and redemptive day in the history of faith." The Christian faith has nothing to fear, except that men may be satisfied with defending the gospel instead of preaching it; that they shall argue for the supernatural instead of doing the supernatural; that they shall spend their time proving the immortality of the soul instead of living the immortal life. For, after all, the Christian faith rests finally not on an argument, but on a concrete experience. It is life that cries out for Christ; it is life that Christ satisfies; it is life that Christ brings. But the apologetic which considers only the intellectual standing of the Christian faith is not complete. The Christian faith will languish while we are making unanswerable arguments in its support. The only evidence sufficient to-day to keep alive men's belief in the supernatural is to do the supernatural. One twice-born man is a better defense of the Chris-

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tian faith than many volumes on the psychology of conversion.

There is need now and ever of adventurous souls, intellectually and spiritually adventurous, who will blaze "a trail to God across the tangled wild" of present-day philosophies and skepticisms. And as long as Christ brings new life, abounding life, so long the Christian faith stands unshaken in the thought and confidence of men.

It is because our very life cries out for the living God that we may believe profoundly in the secure standing-place of faith. Faith is not in peril. The faith that the Bible has a message from the living God to men, that God is the Father of all men, that all good things are safe in His hand, that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that faith is more secure than ever.

II

The Present-Day Use of the Bible

WHAT of the present standing of the Holy Scriptures? Are we warranted in still holding that the Sacred Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation?

The very question thrusts us at once into an atmosphere rife with discussion. For half a century the Bible has been the storm-center of religious interest. Its literary make-up has been critically studied; its historical statements have been questioned; its scientific allusions have been investigated in the light of modern science; the practices of its leading characters have been judged by the present-day conscience.

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It has been in the limelight of skeptical criticism and of reverent scholarly investigation for over fifty years. What is to be our attitude toward the Bible? The question is a fundamental one, for the Bible is the text-book of Christianity. Its teachings are the foundation of modern civilization and the doctrines of the Christian Church. Is it merely one of the sacred books of the world, taking its place beside the Koran or the Egyptian Book of the Dead? Is its inspiration like that of other great masterpieces of literature—"The Psalm of Life," "In Memoriam," "Paradise Lost"—or is the Bible in a peculiar sense the message of God to mankind? Does it speak to the soul of man with an authority that is unapproached?

There are various answers to this question. Men are making the most contradictory assertions concerning the value of the Scriptures, and mental confusion is widespread. There are those to whom the Bible presents no intellectual difficulties. All its statements, however contradictory, are accepted without question. However incredible its stories, they are believed to be reliable history, because they are in the

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Bible. . Besides, the Old Book is clothed with such a halo of sentiment and reverence, that when the modern scholar begins to ask questions about its authorship, its literary character and human elements, these friends are annoyed. They affirm their belief in the Book "from lid to lid," whatever the findings of the scholars may be.

But there are other people in sore perplexity concerning the Bible. They have been taught to believe the Bible is God's Book, and yet they do not know how to interpret what they find in its pages. They have been taught that it is a book of perfect morality, yet it records atrocities committed under the alleged sanction of the Almighty. They have been taught that it is an infallible book, yet they find discrepancies in historical statements which they can not reconcile, and miraculous stories which seem to them incredible. There are no religious difficulties with which the teacher and the preacher meet among thoughtful people to-day so serious and numerous as the difficulties which they meet in the Scriptures. There is a great distress in the minds of many earnest people who

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are struggling to reach conceptions of the Scriptures which will satisfy their minds and hearts.

There are other persons who look upon the Bible as an outgrown book. To them it is "a mass of myths and falsehoods, all of which have been exploded by the discoveries of science." And so we have been witnessing this distressing spectacle—men like Dr. John W. Draper, in his book on "The Conflict Between Science and Religion," and Dr. Andrew D. White, in his "Warfare of Science with Theology," setting aside the Bible because it is contradicted by science. On the other hand, we see misguided disciples of Jesus trying to overturn the truths of science by quotations from the Scriptures.

What practical use can men to-day make of the Scriptures? The Christian creed concerning the Bible is nobly expressed in these words of Paul: "Every Scripture inspired of God is profitable, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished." This declaration of their supreme worth for life is made by the claim of our Lord: "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit, and they are life." Here, then, in the words of Jesus and of Paul,

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we have a statement of the character and use of the Bible. It is a mighty force to be used for the moral and spiritual furnishing of life. This is the astounding claim of Christendom: that the Bible contains the spiritual truth and knowledge needed for the illumination and transformation and guidance of men's lives. The program of Jesus and the Christian Church has shown magnificent faith in the unique character and power of the Word of God. The one force upon which Jesus depended was the sheer power of His gospel. He gave His great teachings with reckless prodigality to learned Jews and ignorant peasants—to a Nicodemus and to a woman of Samaria—believing that His Word was the seed, having in its own life the guarantee of the harvest. So utter was His faith in the vital power of His message that He made this the sole instrument in establishing the heavenly kingdom. If He performed miracles, they were only the concrete embodiments or scenic illustrations of some supreme truth which had to be seen in order to be felt.

And what was the equipment with which He sent forth the founders of the Christian

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Church? Simply His Word—no ritual, no system of Church government, no scheme of organization, no plan for the redemption of the world, save by “the foolishness of preaching.” Everywhere the heralds of the cross went they had one charge, “Preach the Word.” Whatever the task to be achieved, they had but one instrument, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Whatever the citadel to be stormed—the corruption of Corinth, the materialism of Ephesus, the imperial paganism of Rome—it was always and only with the proclamation of the Word of God. And what is this vast missionary enterprise of the Christian Church of to-day, invading every continent and island of the sea, holding out to all of every land and tongue an open book—the Bible? There is nothing like it in human history. Men and women leaving their homes, going among strange and often degraded peoples, expecting to change their social customs and their political ideals; to found homes instead of harems; to transform the whole moral life of communities. With what? Not with new physical forces, not with new political constitutions, not with new truths for the mind;

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but with the words of God, which have in them power of intellectual quickening, social uplift, moral transformation, and spiritual comfort.

First of all, note the intellectual force of the Bible. Here is a unique library, composed of sixty-six books, written in three languages, by thirty different writers, its composition covering a period of a thousand years. In this collection of pamphlets and books is gathered almost every variety of literature—history, fiction, poetry, romance, orations, sermons, codes of law, doctrinal expositions, prophecies, and apocalypses. The Bible “addresses and creates alert intelligence. It is the most important single educative force in the modern world.”¹ Millions have learned to read in order that they might read the Bible; students by the thousand are studying Greek simply to read the New Testament. The Hebrew language would long ago have been lost to the Christian world but for the desire to read the *ipsissima verba* of Israel’s prophets and sages.

But more, there is another aspect of the educational force of the Bible of even greater significance: it enlarges the outlook; it widens

¹ Cf. Faunce, “The Educational Idea of the Ministry,” page 78.

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the horizon of human life; it compels the men of Europe and America to look at the problems of life through the atmosphere of the Oriental mind. As we face the great questions of truth, duty, destiny, it makes us the companions of those in the far distant parts whose ideas and institutions and movements have most affected human history. The Bible gives to the common reader a world horizon, kindling the imagination and arousing to nobler ideals. It is the very core of all true education. From the purely intellectual point of view, in the impulse toward culture which it has awakened, "the Bible has performed in modern times a vastly greater educative service than the entire classical literature of the Greeks and Romans."¹

Take a wider view. Every student of history is familiar with the way in which the spirit of the Scriptures has affected the civilization of the world. Five hundred years ago John Wyclif translated the Scriptures into the language of the English people. This marked the beginning of a new and grander epoch in English history—an era of intellectual awakening, of political

¹Cf. Faunce, "The Educational Idea of the Ministry," page 80,

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reform, and of moral and religious advancement. One hundred and fifty years later Luther found a copy of God's Word in the library at Erfurt, and its translation into the German language was the beginning of Germany's greatness. Again the Bible proved itself the spirit and life of the nation. A little later Philippe de Marnix, from a prison in Utrecht, into which he had been thrust by the Spaniards, began the translation of the Scriptures into the Dutch language. The result, the Dutch Republic was born, and has stood ever since a citadel of democracy and liberty. At the centenary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Mr. Choate, American ambassador to the English court, made this notable utterance: "The Pilgrim Fathers carried their only possession of lasting value to the new England from the shores of old England. That wonderful possession was the King James' Bible. Upon it a new State was founded; it was their only readable book; it was the ark of their covenant; and within its sacred covers they found

Their shelter from the stormy blast
And their eternal home.

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Would you know how completely the Bible was the one treasure of these early pioneers of civilization in the West, you only need to see one of the few copies of family Bibles handed down to us. Its leaves were dog-eared, where they were absolutely worn away by the pious thumbs that had turned them. Twice a year it was read through in each family, from Genesis to Revelation. The laws and customs of the community were founded upon the Holy Book."

Now it is no accident that the greatest period in English history, the birth of English literature, the founding of the Dutch Republic, the beginning of Germany's greatness, and the establishment of the American Republic pointed to the Bible in the hands of the people. Skeptics may cavil, the Scriptures may be accused of being unhistorical, unscientific, and even immoral in some of their recorded incidents; but here is a fact which no blizzard of infidelity has ever shaken: the sovereign civilizations of the world testify to the power and vitality of the Holy Book. God's Word in Christ has been the life of nations. It has been, and still is, the one creative, vitalizing power, ever pushing men

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upward and onward, out of ignorance and servitude and moral despair.

The Bishop of London, visiting America at the time of the Jamestown Exposition on an errand for his majesty's government, presented to the old Bruton Church, from Edward VII, a copy of the Bible. The lectern on which it rests was presented by the President of the United States. The base of the lectern stands upon a large globe, supported by the symbols of the English and American nations—the lion and the eagle—a parable of the growth and greatness of these two nations.

But more important still than the creation of intellectual alertness has been the force of the Bible in the making of character. Notwithstanding all the misunderstandings which have been heaped upon its truth and the superstition which has clouded its pages, in the Bible we hear "the voice of God forever speaking across the centuries the laws of right and wrong." We turn to the Old Testament and we hear the voices of the Hebrew prophets denouncing the sins of the rich and the privileged classes, pleading for the protection and the rights of the

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poor, and by their lofty patriotism setting ablaze before our eyes the deathless ideals of just government and political equality. It is in the Old Testament that the sense of civic and social duty was born. Turn to the New Testament—it is the first and foremost exponent of religious individualism. Jesus discovered the individual, and out of the magnificent individualism of the New Testament have sprung the moral initiative and energy of the modern world. It is no mere coincidence that the great forward movements in moral reform and in religion have been closely connected with the revival of the study of the Scriptures. The great theological awakening in England began in the prayerful study of the Greek Testament by a little group of Oxford students. What was the motive power of the movement in England which led to the liberating of her slaves? Wilberforce and his companions, while traveling on the Continent, began to freshen their knowledge of the Greek Testament, and out of that sprung the freedom of the slaves. Whence has come the mighty crusade in the interest of the masses of toilers, proclaiming industrial freedom, but

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from the new ability to apply the teachings of Jesus to social and industrial conditions? History abundantly justifies the claim of Jesus: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." The Word is the herald of the Spirit that moves over the chaos of the world, creating government, industry, knowledge, religion, and making everything in its order beautiful.

But if the Bible has been a mighty factor in the creation of a higher national life, it is because it brings the regenerating power of God into the life of the individual. What appeal does the Bible make to us as men? If you are a student of literature you will admire the variety and the richness of its literary treasures; but it is more than a book of authentic history, inspiring poetry, and stirring prophecy. Its literary gems have been set in the great masterpieces of our language; and yet the dynamic of the Word of God is not in its literature. As you read these pages you are impressed not with the fineness of the writings, but with the moral burden of every book of the Bible. Its everlasting appeal is to the conscience of men.

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It always speaks to man as a moral being, as an immortal. It speaks to him of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. Its revelation begins when moral and religious ideals are low, and character is debased. And in the moral childhood of the race certain practices were permitted which outrage the moral sense of our day. In the outworking of the divine plan for the Hebrew nation God used certain low and imperfect instruments in the accomplishment of His purpose. He took men as He found them and spoke to them on their plane, so as to lift them to a higher. "New truths about God have to grow out of the sheaths of old ones," because the Bible is a living book. It is the record of the growing revealment of God to a growing race—a race developing in spiritual perception and in depth and in vigor of moral purpose. If measured by the Christian ideal, the Bible contains a strange mixture of ideas and laws, practices and principles, which are far from perfect. But notwithstanding the fact that many of its laws have been abrogated and its customs outgrown and its ideals enlarged, it throbs with moral purpose. Notwithstanding

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it begins with men on low moral levels, from the very first it sets before them one supreme goal—the doing of the perfect will of God. If some of its earlier moral standards are outgrown, everywhere there is uncompromising opposition to evil and the proclamation of the holy will of God as the supreme law of life.

How close the Bible comes to the moral life of every man! He is conscious of standing between two worlds, each of which claims him for its own; and so his life is one endless moral struggle. How vividly this conflict appears on the pages of the Bible! From the Garden of Eden to Gethsemane, with Adam and Abraham, with Jacob and Joseph, with Saul and David, with Peter and Judas, with Paul and Demas, with one and all, it is the same endless warfare. Everywhere the Bible rings out the appeal to men to stand, and having done all, to stand. A great skeptic has said, "That if anything could prove the book to be the Word of God, it is this way it has of aiding conscience in opening our eyes to the two possibilities which lie before us, and bidding us choose for eternity." When does the right look so glorious and truth so

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mighty as when these stand before us and make their appeal through the Word of God?

But the supreme value of the Bible for modern life is not its educative force, quickening the intellects of men, nor its moral power, creating the great moral movements of the world. Its greatest value is as a teacher of religion. It is pre-eminently a book of religion.

The failure to apprehend this simple fact has been the fruitful source of the past misunderstanding of the Bible. It is not intended to teach science. It is not designed to be a cyclopedia of universal knowledge. It is a Book of Religion, produced by and recording men's experience of God. It lifts men out of the materialism of a sense-world and discovers to them the realities and the glories of the unseen. It gives to the world and to human life a spiritual meaning. In the midst of the moral chaos and wickedness of the earth, it sets men to believing in, and working for a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. With the shadows of human suffering thick around us, with the tragedies of life multiplying, it shows to men the bleeding hands and brow of Calvary's Divine Sufferer; and in

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His agony we hear the heart-cry of the Infinite God, suffering with His children. With the burden of life's sorrow and the mystery of death and the grave upon us, the world would be converted into a vast asylum of despair, were it not for the great words of God's truth and promise. The Bible's purpose is to answer the supreme questions of life—What is God? How does He think and feel toward men? What has God done for men? What is man's duty and destiny? The answer to these questions, which will not down, is the great burden of the Book.

What if the geology of Genesis is in conflict with modern science? The Bible gives to us that mighty affirmation which has never fallen from the lips of scientist: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." What if its heroes were imperfect men? It shows us how their minds were illuminated and their characters ennobled as they walked with God. What if its scattered ethical maxims are defective, and some of its social customs degrading? It furnishes "the highest and most effective inspiration for human living."

The chief question, then, to ask of the Bible

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is not the question of the higher critic as to date, authenticity, and literary composition; it is rather, what is its central doctrine of life? What its effective moral force in human living?

The truth which fairly throbs and flames on every page of the Bible is of "a world with God in it, of humanity with God in it, of history with God in it, of a great world movement from God through humanity to God again, whose God is all in all."

In the phrase of Coleridge, the Bible finds us and helps us to find God. It may contain errors of science or history, it may portray moral imperfections in its characters and incidents; but so long as it "finds us in the deepest places and springs of life," and gives a voice to our cries in all our moods of triumph and defeat, of joy and misery, so long as its words speak to us across the ages with imperishable insight into human needs, it will live and prevail.

It contains the soul's sublimest liturgy. In the hour of trust it voices our confidence, "The Lord is my Shepherd." In the day of trouble it exults in the great consolation, "God is our

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refuge and strength." In the high noon of joy it gives us our song, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." In the valley of depression it breathes our prayer, "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." In the gathering darkness it voices our triumphant cry, "The Lord is my Light and He is become my salvation." In approaching death it whispers, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

Now the contention is that because the Old Book has been the greatest educative force in modern history, because it creates character, because it brings men to the feet of God and leaves them there, it has a secure intellectual standing-place. If this contention is true, the most important thing is not the historicity of the story of Jonah's adventure. What is more important is that the "Book of Jonah gives us the earliest known proclamation of a divine love which knows no bounds of race or creed, but enfolds every human being." The seat of the Bible's authority is not in the infallibility of its details, but in its absolute reliability as a guide to God, to righteousness, and peace. Its authority rests on its ability to present a picture

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of God and man which our enlightened reason and purest affection approve as true.

You are to go to the Bible not for scientific theses, nor for a forecast of coming events. It is not a treatise on science, nor a celestial weather bureau. It is not a mere text-book of theology. It is a book of religion, which guides men into a knowledge of God and into the faith of Christ, and into the glory of righteousness. It brings men into an experience of the peace of forgiveness, of the power of prayer, of the poise of trust, and of the joy of heavenly hope.

Here, then, is the Bible tried and tested in the fires of criticism, and not found wanting. Its supreme authority in morals and religion is vindicated by Christ and by the experience of the Church for two millenniums. History bears witness to its power in the civilization of the world, and in the great forward movements of humanity. In the experience of scholar and peasant it has been a guide to peace and to God. Its moral and spiritual teachings have been confirmed, and not discredited, by science. Its pages are aglow with instruction and inspiration for right living. Its abiding value is not

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its contribution to science, to philosophy, to literature, but in the complete equipment for life which it gives us. While "it does not remove the intellectual difficulties which we feel in contemplating life and the world, it outflanks them by a reverence for God, which makes it possible to trust and love Him, notwithstanding the mystery of His ways; and which assures us that all good things are safe and are moving on and up

"Through graves and ruins and the wreck of things,
Borne ever Godward with increasing might."

Back of the mystery and uncertainty of our lives, back of the apparent aimlessness of much history, and back of the woe and horror of much more, it reveals God—the Almighty Friend and Lover of men, the Chief of burden bearers, and the Leader of all in self-sacrifice. Over the seething chaos there breathes a Spirit divine; from everlasting to everlasting there stretches a broad bow of promise and of light."¹
The Bible is

"The Fountain-Light of all our day,
A Master Light of all our seeing."

¹ Bowne, "Studies in Christianity," page 24.

III

Teaching Religion

THERE is one aspect of the work of the Christian Church which is not receiving to-day the attention which it deserves. There is a popular demand for the preacher-evangelist, for the pastor-preacher, for the preacher-administrator, for the preacher-reformer, and the preacher-healer. But in the popular mind the preacher-teacher is not in the foreground. The working program of the present-day Church does not give the teaching of religion a prominent place.

Now there are four popular conceptions concerning teaching religion. The first is that religion can not be taught. There are many devout and earnest souls who believe that their experience of spiritual things has come to them direct from God; that it can not be mediated or

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shared by another. According to this view, religion is too personal to be taught. It comes to us from God—a new life complete—and teaching is not necessary.

The second view conceives of religion mainly as a doctrine to be believed. According to this view, religion has been taught when certain doctrines about God have been accepted intellectually. Its method is the catechism and the doctrinal sermon. It glorifies the creed. It proclaims the saving power of right beliefs. To the man whose religion is primarily dogma, the unpardonable sin is heresy—a departure from the doctrinal standard.

Next to the conception of religious teaching solely as the imparting of knowledge is that which regards it as being merely the creation of emotion. This is the narrow revivalist's method, while the other is the method of the dogmatist. These two ideas of religious teaching are producing, side by side, in every community two types of religious life, one aiming chiefly to give intellectual instruction, the other to cultivate religious feeling.

But to a fourth man religion is not merely

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an isolated experience which is imparted direct from God, nor a creed to be taught, nor an emotion to be felt. It is conduct. To him, teaching religion is instruction in the moral duties of life. To him the preacher is the spiritual director who guides and controls the ethical activities of men's lives.

These are some of the various conceptions concerning the teaching of religion. Here they stand, side by side, the mystic teaching religion as revelation; the dogmatist, as creed; the revivalist, as feeling; and the moralist, as law.

It will be seen at once that the difference in these various methods grows out of the difference in men's conception of what religion really is. The conception of religion which the people called Methodists have held from the beginning, is an experience of the life of Christ in the life of man. It proposes, by means of truth taught, by means of emotions awakened, by means of direction in duty-doing, to bring men to Christ. In other words, the teaching of religion, here set forth as the chief function of the Church, does not ignore doctrine, or emotion, or discipline. It looks beyond them always, to every

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man brought into vital relation with Jesus Christ, making truth a mirror through which men see Christ; arousing the feelings of the soul in the presence of Christ; teaching men to do the things which Christ commands. The conception of teaching religion which runs throughout this discussion is that truth and feeling and duty all spring from the living Christ and return to Him again. Doctrine and emotion and rules of conduct are not an end in themselves. They have value only as means through which we come to know Christ. This insight gives a new dignity and importance to the work of the minister as the truth-teacher. Interpreting religion, then, not as a spiritual prodigy, not as a dogma, not as ritual, not as conduct, but as life in and by and for Christ, sustained and guided by the truth of Christ, the supreme task of the Christian Church is teaching religion.

The first warrant for the teaching ministry of the Church is in the New Testament. In the Gospels and Epistles we are always in sight of the teaching-preacher. Such was Jesus. When the multitudes came He taught them. The oft-reiterated preamble, with which the evangelist

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introduces His matchless words, is, "And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying." The first popular impression which the Gospels record is that He taught the people "as one having authority." Nicodemus voiced the conviction of the serious-minded in his salutation, "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God." It was the teaching of Jesus that first gripped the minds of the people. And who were His converts? The name He gives them is suggestive of the dominant characteristic of His ministry. They were disciples—learners.

Again, the history of the Christian Church will not let us forget the value of a teaching evangelism. The addresses in the Acts of the Apostles of Stephen, and Paul, and Peter were not mere exhortations to men to repent; they were instructions in the truth of Christ. They preached Christ and the Resurrection. They reasoned with men of temperance, righteousness, and judgment. Whole epistles of Paul are meaningless if they be regarded simply as religious exhortations. These strong-reasoned arguments, setting forth Christ as the Resurrection and the Life, became the missionary watch-

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word with which the Roman Empire was led to become Christian. The great epochs in the later history of the Church followed the method of Christ and of the apostles, in the prominence which was given to the teaching ministry. The spiritual dynamic of the Reformation was the truths of Christ, which became luminous and irresistible in the hands of Luther and Melancthon. The secret of the influence of Calvin was not his scheme of statecraft, but the moral vitality and vigor of his teaching. The resistless moral passion of the whole Puritan movement, both in England and in America, sprang out of the great truths which were taught by the Puritan preacher. The great religious awakening in New England, under Jonathan Edwards, was the product of his powerful though somber preaching of the majestic doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Every popular preacher whose influence has been permanent has been a teacher of some vital Christian truth—John Wesley, of the conscious reality of an experience of the things of God; Phillips Brooks, of the dignity of the Christian life; Henry Ward Beecher, of the love of God.

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There has never been an era in the history of the Christian Church, great in its evangelistic enthusiasm, in its missionary spirit, in its reform movements, or in its philanthropic and humanitarian enterprises, which has not been produced by the clear and strong preaching of some one of the great creative truths of Christianity.

We find splendid illustration of the influence of the teaching function of the Church in the Puritan movement. The reaction from the liturgical idea of religion was extreme and revolutionary, forsaking the cathedral for the wooden chapel and humble meeting-house, leaving the trappings of the altar for the elaborate sermon and the pulpit. The Puritan preachers were teachers of the youth, authoritative interpreters of religious truth. They sometimes committed the blunder of enforcing their ideas by the penal code, as in the Massachusetts Theocracy. But the worthy task they set for themselves, year after year, was the religious instruction of the community. Whatever of contempt we may heap upon the two and three hour sermons, they were dignified and thoughtful presenta-

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tions of religious truth to intelligence, and not to mere sentiment or passion.

There is one feature of the times in which we live which makes the teaching function of the Church still more important, namely, the complete separation of Church and State in our country. Practically all religious instruction has been dropped from our schools. The early American colonies for two hundred years made religious education a duty. The doctrines of the Church were a part of the curricula of the schools. But since 1833 religious education in the public schools has been largely abandoned. In all the colonies, save Rhode Island, the government provided for the religious education of the youth. Three million copies of "The New England Primer" were published for use in the schools. But now no definite form of Christian instruction is given in the public schools of the nation. In many of these schools the simplest forms of religious instruction, such as the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, are prohibited. This is the result not of the irreligiousness of the American people, as it might at first seem; it is rather a compromise which seems necessary

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on account of the heterogeneous religious make-up of our population, including Jews, Roman Catholics, and Protestants. At any rate, the American people agree that there is to be no religious instruction by the State. The result in the Protestant population is a very general neglect of religious teaching. Here is our peril: The State has forbidden religious instruction of our youth in the schools, while the Church has made no adequate provision for their religious training. The result is that there are millions of our youth to-day who have practically no religious education. And this is the greatest national problem which we face. In France every Thursday is set apart as a holiday for religious instruction of the youth; in Germany provision is made for Christian teaching in the curricula of the schools and colleges; but in America, reverence, obedience to conscience, the recognition of God in history and nature, the place of Christ in civilization, the value of the Bible both for literature and for life, the relation of Christianity to other world religions, are nowhere taught with any thoroughness. It scarcely needs to be said that the teaching of

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these things is far more vital to the character of our citizenship and to the future permanence and peace of the nation than are our scientific studies and patriotic exercises.

There is still another consideration which emphasizes the imperative importance of the teaching function of the Christian Church, namely, the need of religious instruction for the stability and strength of Christian discipleship. To make converts to Christ and to enroll them in the membership of the Church is of small consequence, unless they are also taught in the truth and duties of the Christian life. The popular evangelistic invitation of to-day, "Come to Christ," to vast numbers means but little. For a man to become a disciple of Henry George means his acquaintance with Mr. George's principles of taxation and statecraft. To say to men, "Follow Tolstoi," means acceptance of Tolstoi's scheme of life. But when men come to Christ, there is often lacking any clear conception of Christ's ideal of life and duty, of God, of human society, of the moral law, of personal attitude toward business, the family, the government, and philanthropy. If

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Christian discipleship is to be both stable and strong, it must be taught what the following of Christ involves in these manifold relations.

Furthermore, the uninstructed religious mind of the present is the fertile soil for the growth of numberless religious fads—Theosophy, New Thought, Christian Scienceism, and various mixtures of superstition, pagan thought and Christian teaching. There was never a time when the apostolic exhortation, “Be able to give a reason for the hope that is within thee,” was more pertinent than at the present. The separation of Church and State, resulting largely in the neglect of religious training of the youth in the home, and the reaction from the labored doctrinal preaching of a generation ago, has produced a state of religious illiteracy which is nothing less than alarming.

The Church’s function, then, is the creation and the maintenance of Christian ideals. Men must be shown what these ideals are and what they demand in thought and conduct. The Church must answer by the slow, silent process of Christian education the questions which are vital to strength of character and peace of mind

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in every generation. For example: How shall men conceive of God? How shall they think of Christianity? How shall they think of Christ as Jesus of Nazareth or as the "strong Son of God, Immortal Love?" How shall they think of society? How shall they think of life, as probation or education, or both? What shall be their attitude toward public affairs, toward modern culture, toward the reforms of the day? What does the Christian spirit require of the man of business? What is the Christian view of the duties of citizenship? What is the Christian attitude toward commerce, toward warfare, toward philanthropy, toward the backward races? In short, what is the Christian ideal of life for our day? To answer that question so as to command the intellects and arouse the consciences of our time is the inexhaustible and fascinating task of the Christian minister. Shortly after Mr. James Bryce came to this country as ambassador from Great Britain, he said in a public address: "Who are your poets? That is the question for you. Who are writing your songs or stirring your hearts?—or is not your heart being stirred? Each generation and

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each land should have its own poets—men of lofty thought, who shall dream and sing for it, who shall gather up its tendencies and formulate its ideals and voice its spirit, proclaiming its duties and awakening its enthusiasm.” This is a fine characterization of the minister’s mission. To “dream,” to “stir” and “formulate,” and “voice” and “awaken” and “proclaim”—these are the marks of the preacher of Christ. To make men see the divine vision, so as to stir their consciences, and proclaim with authoritative voice the commands of the higher life, and to awaken men toiling in the field of time to the sense of the Eternal Presence—this is the glorious work of the Christian Church.

Now this idea of the teaching ministry of the Church does not depreciate the inspirational and evangelistic aspect of its work. Men are to be won, they are to be reformed, they are to be brought out of the wildest surges of vice and despair, they are to be twice-born. But to make this work of rescue the only work of the Christian Church is to depart from the apostolic idea of a teaching ministry, and also to neglect a wide and fruitful field of Christian nurture.

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The plea is not for pulpit pedantry, for scholastic essays, for literary diversions, for academic discussions, nor for theological diatribes; but for such a presentation of Christ and the Resurrection as will make the new-life ideal, luminous, and germinant.

But what is the minister to teach? The doctrines of Christianity as interpreted by his own Church? Yes, but he is to be more than a mere pedagogue in the catechism. Doctrine is vital, but he must be more than a mere phonograph in dogma. He is to be the teacher of his times, but not a pulpit dabbler in sociology, politics, and higher criticism. He is to be a teacher of the spiritual views and ideals of life; he is to show men how to look at life from the Christian viewpoint. He is to lead them up to some clear mountain of vision, whence they can see through the mists of materialism and the perplexities of human sorrow the light that never was on land or sea. The supreme task of the teacher-preacher is to give men an abiding and permanent sense of moral and spiritual values, and to show them the infinite worthwhileness of life.

IV

The Authority of Christ

THE most urgent question of religion to-day is the question of religious certainty. Increasing numbers of the Roman Catholic Church are unable to accept the voice of the Church as supreme. The Protestant claim for the Bible as the final authority in religion, and the Rationalist's claim for the reason as the ultimate court of appeal, to many are alike untenable in theory and unsatisfactory in experience. But if the gospel is to command a hearing it must come to men with the note of authority. The absence of the great "verilys" of Jesus is the weakness of much of the Christian teaching of the present. With popular confidence shaken in the supreme authority of the Church or of the Holy Book, the religious mind is asking, never so anxiously as to-day, "To whom shall we go for the words of eternal life?"

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The effort in recent years to reconstruct theology around Christ as the center is the recognition of the mastery of Jesus in the field of morals and religion. The popular and much-misunderstood cry, "Back to Christ" for theology and conduct, is profoundly significant as a recognition of the centrality and mastership of Jesus. Further, it is interesting to note that all schools of thought, Radical and Conservative, Socialistic and Evangelical, Ritualist and Nonconformist, represented by men differing as widely as Tolstoi and Peabody, Harnack and Stevens, Fairbairn and Bousset, all alike turn to Jesus saying, "One is our Master, even Christ." And what is this but a recognition of the New Testament impression of Jesus? The note of authority in Jesus' teaching made a mighty impression upon the disciples' minds. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," has been recorded by the evangelists more than seventy times. The first distinguishing feature of Jesus' teaching which the people noticed was the authority with which He spoke.

But the very fact that men representing the most extreme views of the personality of Christ

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recognize His spiritual mastership, indicates the need of some clear idea as to the nature and sphere of religious authority.

Fundamental to any intelligent discussion of this subject is our conception of the person of Jesus. If the claim is made that Jesus is the supreme teacher of truth, that He has given to the world the final moral ethic, that claim is tenable only on the ground of the genuine historic incarnation of the Son of God. If Jesus has spoken the final word for belief and duty and destiny, it is because of His unique character as the Redeemer. We may rightly claim that Christ's teaching surpasses, by infinite distances, all other teaching of spiritual things. We may justly hold, with John Stuart Mill, that there is no higher law of conduct than that given in the life of Jesus. But in the strict sense there can be no such thing as an external authoritative truth-test in the realm of theology. There can be no authoritative, inflexible rules which are adequate for the guidance of life. The seat of Christ's authority is to be found not in His teaching nor in His ethics

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alone, but in His redemption. The truth of Christianity must have a living test.

Jesus' unique authority rests, therefore, not on the ground of His amazing range of knowledge, nor on the ground of His intellectual genius, in comparison with the philosophers and poets of the race; but His supreme authority rests on the fact that He is so bound up with the highest and best in us that He claims our allegiance. It is the authority which rises out of the new life. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become children of God." The authority of Christ is the authority of the Divine Man who becomes to men the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is not the standard of a truth or a system of truths. It is not a law embodied or expressed in some historic institution as its custodian. It is the voice of the living, holy God manifesting Himself "at one supreme point on Calvary, but throbbing at every other point in human history with the compassion of an eternal cross."

To what then do we make our appeal as we turn to the Christ of the New Testament? Not

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alone to the supreme intellectual genius of the ages, not alone to a masterful teacher of ethics; but to the God-man, to the One whose human life received and manifested the divine as fully as human life can receive and manifest the divine life; not to a double-headed person in a dual personality, acting now as man and again as God, but to one conscious personality, human in all His divineness and divine in all His humanness. This view of Jesus as the incarnation of God, restrained within the limits of the human, is fundamental to a rational conception of His authority. And this at once guides us in determining the sphere of Christ's authority. The revelation has to do primarily with the character of God and the needs and possibilities of the human soul.

The supremacy of Jesus thus interpreted has important bearing upon some vital problems. One of these is the *problem of religious belief*. What was the character of Christ's teaching concerning God? We turn to Him in vain for proofs of the divine existence. In His teachings there is an utter absence of arguments such as Kant and Hegel used. He never deals with the

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metaphysical side of things. While His whole mission was to reveal and attest the reality of God, He always approached this sublime truth ethically and vitally, and never speculatively. He reveals God not by intellectual demonstration, but by moral illumination. His utterances concerning the Father have the accent of absolute assurance. But His is not merely an intellectual certainty. His conviction of God's being and character rises out of His profound communion and spiritual oneness with God. The inspiration of the great "verilys" of Jesus is not an intellectual act so much as personal experience. "Whatsoever the Father saith unto Me, I speak," is the testimony of One whose knowledge of God comes not from reasoning, but from fellowship. Such knowledge is not a deduction, but a vision. He did not reason about truth. He saw truth. Do we wonder at the moral penetration of Jesus? Great tracts of divine knowledge, veiled to us, seem to lie open to Him. His unbroken devotion to the doing of righteousness gave to Him a clearness of spiritual vision and a mastery of unseen forces which seem utterly beyond us.

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"I do always the things which are pleasing to the Father," is the secret of His vast range of spiritual wisdom. Christ sets forth God not as an idea, but as a power illuminating, restraining, and transforming man. Instead of an intellectual conception of God, we are given a conscious fellowship. Deeper than any intellectual certainty is the assurance which rises out of an experience of His power guiding, ruling, and sanctifying our life. Christ reveals God neither by definitions nor by logical arguments, but by quickening our spiritual perceptions, by disclosing the spiritual realities of our own lives—the deeps in man answering the infinite deeps in God.

The impression we get of Christ in the Gospels is not of a lecturer giving formal instruction for note-book preservation. Here is the Great Teacher, with a perfect vision of God, trying, by epigram and parable, by miracle and conversation, by every means in His power, to make men see God. His teaching lacks bulk, but Jesus so packed His words with a few vast ideas that they became first luminous, then germinant. They are authoritative because they

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are vital; and the mark of the authority of the gospel is that its utterances still throb with a dynamic force not unlike the power of Christ in Galilee and Jerusalem.

Here, then, is an authority in the field of religious truth which is not chiefly intellectual, but vital and experimental. Jesus' matchless sayings caused men to wonder, but it was the whiteness of His imperial spirit, the perfect poise of His character, and the vitalizing and transforming power of His life which satisfied human longings. His imperatives were reinforced by His own perfect doing of the will of God. "Men saw in Him a flawless purity, a steadfast purpose of good which never wavered, gentleness and a charity which knew no limit." His disciples saw that to Him God was the one vital reality; that He lived in the abiding consciousness of the Father; that He wrought no work without seeking the Father's guidance; that He taught no truth without claiming Him as its source; that He met no temptation without seeking strength from Heaven; that He looked upon every disaster as having a place in God's wise ordering; that He found in prayer

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relief and exaltation, and that His matchless life drew from a divine communion its beauty and glory.

The supremacy of Christ's teaching, therefore, is to be tested by moral experience. Jesus' appeal to every man is primarily not to the intellectual judgment, but to the moral sense through personal obedience. "If any man will-eth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God."

Christ rests His gospel upon the satisfaction which it gives to the mind of man who obeys its truth. He never seems anxious to fortify His teaching by intellectual bulwarks or miraculous wonders. His appeal is to living experience. "If any man cometh unto Me, the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." If the gospel stands it will be because it satisfies, and satisfies forever, the men who will to do the will of God. If the gospel ceases to satisfy the lives of men by its discovery to them of spiritual peace and power, no defense of argument or régime of miracles could preserve it in the confidence of a single generation of men. But

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while human nature remains what it is, with its deeply-imbedded moral instinct, with its longing to see God, which is awakened by Jesus' presence, Christ, and Christ alone, is eternally the way to the Father.

Another vital question upon which the authority of Christ sheds important light is the *problem of personal conduct*. More and more men are seeking practical guidance in duty by asking "What would Jesus do?" The authority of Jesus' teaching is being invoked in support of Tolstoi's theory of non-resistance, and the latest socialistic and communistic scheme, as well as the most ascetic ideals of personal living. Are Jesus' commands general in their form and universal in their application? Are they to be interpreted literally as absolute commands for the regulation of the details of personal conduct? Or is the application of His teaching affected by changing conditions of life? Take, for example, His instruction concerning almsgiving: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away." This teaching was given before there was any organized system of charity.

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Urgent cases of human need must be relieved, and in order to provide this relief Jesus sought to inculcate the spirit of charity and of brotherly sympathy. But under the different social conditions of the present day, with our great number of philanthropies thoroughly organized, with an entirely different economic system from that which existed in Jesus' day, the carrying out of Jesus' command requires a very different course of action from that required in His time. In other words, the pithy, epigrammatical sayings of Jesus can not be converted into articulated and complete systems of law for human society. His teaching is like a great searchlight, revealing here and there distinct glimpses of the landscape, but unrelated and disconnected. They must be interpreted always from the standpoint of the great, loving heart, and not used as the measurement of a social system or of a hard-and-fast scheme of life. His strong and sparkling utterances were not intended as a contribution either to a sociological scheme or a theological system of doctrine, but "as a vitalizing power in moral experience." The mark of Christ's supreme authority in the field

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of conduct is that He made men feel that they must be like Him, and that they must do the works of God.

The commandments of Jesus, taken as positive rules or legal injunctions to do this or to do that, are in no sense an adequate solution of the problem of conduct. Life is too vast, duties are too complex for rules made into fixed forms.

To raise the question, then, "What would Jesus do?" as an infallible guide for the purpose of securing authoritative guidance in the particular forms of our duty, is not enough. To be sure, the very asking of that question brings one into the presence of the Lord, and confronts him with the supreme revelation of God in man, and renews the call of his forgotten ideals. To imagine Jesus in the midst of the experiences of our human life at once presents to us "an image of all that is divinest in humanity, whether in work or in suffering." But the question, What would Jesus do? has no significance for us as a practical guide, except as it means, What is Christ's will for us? And what His will for us may be depends upon personal conditions.¹ We

¹ Cf. Forrest, "The Authority of Christ," pages 171-189.

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may not hope to solve the perplexing problem of personal conduct by projecting Christ imaginatively into our experience, with His different surroundings and His unique religious mission in the world; but rather by asking what loyalty to Christ requires of us, with our specific work and condition. The supreme duty of Christian discipleship is not slavish imitation of Jesus, but "loyalty to Him in spirit in the untrodden paths of life." The one necessity is that we should be conscious of fidelity at every step to the authority of the Christ-life. And Christ reveals Himself to us ever more fully as we follow on to obey Him. This mighty impulse to obey Christ, impossible though it seems at times, goes hand in hand with increasing knowledge of the Divine Will until, in adoring wonder, we exclaim with Paul, "Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or even think, unto Him be glory."

Another important inquiry is concerning the application of the authority of Jesus to *the larger social problems*. As civilization becomes more complex in its forms, the questions of social duty grow more perplexing. What does

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the kingship of Christ in society demand? Of course, it demands of the ruler or office-holder that he shall be controlled always in his official duties by the spirit of loyalty to the will of Christ. To submit to the authority of Christ in the State means simply to bring political action to the test of the ethical standard which grows up out of the Christian faith. We can not claim the authority of Christ for any particular form of government or for any political policy. We may insist, under all forms of government and in all policies, upon the fundamental demands of Christ for justice, purity, and kindness. We can neither rule out nor establish the right of the labor union by an appeal to the authority of Christ. The question is in no wise illuminated by speculating as to whether Jesus would be a labor unionist. The only pertinent question is: Under existing industrial conditions, does this organization promote the welfare of men and foster the spirit of Christ? Any rational appeal, then, to the supreme authority of Jesus in society is nothing more or less than a serious effort to bring every political action and every social organization to

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the ethical test of the Christian faith, and to embody, wherever possible, the highest conception of justice and mercy. We can not make a nation Christian by putting the Golden Rule into the constitution, nor by stamping the nation's coin with "In God We Trust." If we should christen a political party "The Christian Party," and put the Sermon on the Mount into its platform, we should still make no adequate recognition of the supreme headship of Jesus Christ. The authority of Christ must be invoked in the sphere of motive and ideal, and not in the sphere of policy and method. These must be adapted to meet intelligently the ever-changing conditions of human society.

Now exactly the same principle applies to all matters of ecclesiastical government and polity. How utterly barren is the endless discussion concerning divine authority for various orders of the ministry, and for various modes of Church administration, when we discover that Christ is not a divider of ecclesiastical honors, but that He came that we might have more abundant life. Any form of Church government—congregational, presbyterial, or episcopal—that intelli-

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gently serves the ends of the spiritual kingdom has upon it the seal of the supreme Christ.

It may be said that unless we have some infallible external authority, giving an unchanging standard of belief and duty, we have no safeguard for the Christian faith. It must be remembered, however, that the voice of the Church, and even the "Thou shalt" of Holy Scripture, give no sure guarantee of the future of the Christian faith, except as these holy voices are vindicated in the living experience of men. This is the living test of Christianity: that it approves itself from generation to generation to the highest and best in men. Humanity continues to bow before Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, because the eternal truth which He revealed in an historic life is perpetually undergoing reinterpretation, and with every fresh interpretation proving itself to be spirit and life.

In a word, then, the authority of Christ is not mechanical or external, it is vital. It is the authority of assured Christian experience. Life is the final source of all authority—Christian life—the life begotten of Christ, inspired by

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Christ, and completed in Christ. Beliefs and doctrines, rules and laws, in so far as they help to produce Christian experience, may be said to bear the authority of Christ. The one unescapable and irrefutable fact is the living Christ, the ultimate authority both for truth and conduct. And the test of the authority is the life which He produces. He comes and men have life, and life is the final witness for religious authority.

V

The Mission of the Prophet of God

IN the old book of Deuteronomy there is a suggestive account of Moses' call to the work of a prophet. Moses hears the people's voice, "Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." This ancient cry of the people for one who would interpret to them the truth of God is at the same time the latest appeal, for this incident of early Hebrew history is true to human experience in every age. Right down through the centuries humanity has been calling for some one to go apart from the ways of men and receive God's message, and then declare it to the people. The function of the ancient prophet was to speak for God. He was to give a religious interpretation of life; he was

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to set in a spiritual light the duties of business and of politics and of society; he was to make men see the Infinite in the affairs of the earth; he was to keep alive in the consciences of men their responsibility to God.

And this is always the supreme function of the prophet of God. He is to be the voice of God to the men of his time; he is to translate his experience of God into the thought of his time; he is to proclaim the spiritual ideals of life; he is to be the interpreter of the moral law; he is to rediscover to his generation the everlasting foundations of religion. In short, the prophet is to stand in the holy place and himself know God, and then come forth to make God known to men. He is to be a teacher of truth, but always teaching the truths that will serve the moral ends of life. His object is not to teach truth for its own sake, but to create righteous character; to reproduce in men's lives in the twentieth century the spirit of the Man of Galilee in the first century, and to make men see the glory of righteousness. With the moral ideals aflame in his own mind, he is to stir men's consciences and to set them to the task of build-

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ing up in the earth the kingdom of righteousness, the republic of God.

There is no finer illustration of the mission of the prophet in modern times than is to be found in John Wesley. Truly, he was a man sent from God with a message to his age.

It is unfortunate that John Wesley is known to-day chiefly as the founder of a great ecclesiastical system. Emerson has said, "An institution is only the lengthened shadow of a man." But the shadow has become so lengthened and the Methodism of to-day so different from the Methodism of Wesley, that his form stands before us in dim outline. He seems like a half mythical founder of a religious denomination—about as real to us to-day as Romulus was to the Roman Empire.

John Wesley was a man of the times and for the times. To appreciate the character of his ministry, we must look at him with the eighteenth century as a background. It was the age of Pitt, Burke, and Fox. It was an era of intellectual activity, but of spiritual barrenness. The Church had lost its moral leadership. James Hamilton's dismal picture was not exag-

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gerated: "Never had a century arisen in England so void of soul and faith. It rose as a sunless dawn, following upon a dewless night. There was no freshness in the past, and no promise in the future. The Puritans were buried and the Methodists were not born." The philosopher of the age was Bolingbroke, brilliant in skepticism, more brilliant in intrigue and vice. Pope was the popular poet. Walpole was the statesman; a "veneered old pagan, an adept in vulgarity, and a devotee of the bottle and the table." Chesterfield, the social leader of the age, instructed his own son in the art of seduction as a part of a polished gentleman's education. The writings of the times could be published to-day only in expurgated editions. It was an age of unbounded extravagance, with a mad passion for material splendor and vicious pleasures. Gambling was an almost universal practice. Lords and ladies were experts in all sorts of knavery. Drunkenness prevailed everywhere. The lower classes aped the follies and vices of the court, and there had grown up a vicious, turbulent, heathen class, which a corrupt government was powerless to restrain and

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a formal Church had no disposition to convert. The intelligent, thriving middle class were skeptical and irreligious. The times were ripe for the terrors of a French Revolution. There was no moral leadership in the Church. It was the subservient tool of a corrupt State. A pure priest of religion could not hold his place. There was neither room nor audience for priest or bishop in the Church of England who would preach and practice religion. The Dissenting Churches had become cold and formal. The sermons of the times were insipid, moral essays, too weak to make men think, too cowardly to make them repent. Religion had become an empty form or a lifeless dogma. Skepticism was widespread, and belief in divine power in the lives of men was almost dead. The work of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men was called an idle dream. Religion had lost its divine passion and had no energy for saving men. It was into this dismal age, with a corrupt State, with society of every rank honeycombed with vice and crime, with a Church whose clergy were preaching dead dogmas and leading idle, dissolute lives, that John Wesley was born.

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John Wesley's preaching was the biggest factor in the moral reformation and social reconstruction of the eighteenth century. When we consider how his message quickened into new life the Church of England; when we consider that the doctrines which he preached have become the central message of all Protestant Christian denominations, and that he became the founder of the largest Protestant body of the New World; that he broke the spiritual slumber of a skeptical and dissolute age; that he awakened English colliers and cavaliers alike to the presence of God; that he was the leader in a revival of true religion which saved the nation from the horrors of a social earthquake, and that he was the pioneer in the great philanthropies which are the glory of the twentieth century—when we consider these things, the words of Carlyle sound like sober truth, when he declared that John Wesley wielded more influence in the world than any of his great contemporaries, William Pitt, the Duke of Wellington, or Napoleon Bonaparte.

What manner of man was this? What was his message? What was the secret of his power?

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He was not a great writer like Goethe. He was not a profound theologian like Athanasius and Augustine. He was not a great scholar like Melancthon. But as a prophet of God, making real to men spiritual things and awakening the Christ-enthusiasm for humanity, he is without a peer since the days of Paul. He so combined the practical genius of the Anglo-Saxon with an all-compelling sense of the reality of religious experience and an apostolic passion for saving men, that for a quarter of a century he exerted a greater influence in England than any other man.

But John Wesley's influence was due primarily not to his masterful genius and the magnitude of his beneficent labors, but rather to his intense earnestness, to his spotless character, to his powerful grasp on the realities of Christian life, and to his vital message.

Now what of Wesley's message? It was the gospel of early Christianity, vitalized and colored by his own experience. His own incomparable words point us to the exhaustless fountain of his preaching and work: "About a quarter before nine, while one was describing the change

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which God works in the heart by faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." His was the apostolic message of the love of the living God, the incarnation of the Son of God, full redemption through the cross, the assurance of faith, and immortality through union with Jesus Christ. This was the triumphant message of Wesley, which converted brutal and degraded sinners by thousands, and which rolled back the rising tide of atheism, and did more for the social "amelioration of England than all the mechanical inventions and legislative devices of a century." Voltaire, with his perpetual sneer, said, "We have never pretended to enlighten shoemakers and servants." John Wesley, with his everlasting affirmation of spiritual birth, made miners and plowboys priests unto God. Wesley brought the fundamental truths of Christianity out of the cloister and set them on the highways of the common people. What Emerson did for culture in making it vital and

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putting it within the reach of common flesh, John Wesley did for religion. "He brought the highest truths out of the Church and set them on foot and on horseback, and the poor colliers of England walked in their light." He preached no new doctrine. He gave to the Church no great intellectual principle, such as produced the Reformation. But he did what was none the less important; he breathed into old truths a new spirit and made them electric with life. His appeal was primarily not to the intellect, but to the conscience and the wills of men. His aim was not to change men's opinions by the power of argument, but to change their lives by the power of God. In a time of prevailing skepticism and irreligion he made religion vital by bringing men face to face with God.

The first distinguishing thing in the preaching of Wesley was *its positive note*. He preached the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion with a certainty of conviction born of personal experience. The conquering power of his gospel was, first and foremost of all, the positive proclamation of the great basal truths of apostolic Christianity, the vital reality of religious expe-

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rience, the imperative need of spiritual birth from above, the assurance of divine forgiveness, Jesus Christ the perfect revelation of God to men, the life of Christ in the life of men—the one ultimate authority for Christian faith and conduct, the certainty of sin's punishment, and the blessedness of a life of righteousness. His was an evangelical rather than a merely ethical gospel. He did not proclaim a redemption by sanitation, fresh air, and free libraries. The glory of Wesley's gospel is, that out of a living experience he gave to the common people a vision of the mighty Son of God, standing still on the earth, making all things new. You never fail to hear in the sermons of John Wesley a clear, strong message of hope and salvation to all men.

Another characteristic of the preaching of Wesley is his *fine sense of intellectual perspective*. He never made the disastrous blunder of putting the secondary and non-essential things in the place of the primary and vital. Scholarly in habit, he never became a religious doctrinaire. He had the insight to see that truth is not an end in itself, but that any doctrine is

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valuable only as it quickens and nourishes in men the divine life. And out of this fine sense of doctrinal perspective came his breadth. He preached the fundamental doctrines of Christianity with positiveness, and yet he was always tolerant of the honest conviction of those who differed from him. He was liberal without being loose. He did not belong to that milk-and-water class of minds that do not believe anything with vigor, lest they may be counted bigoted. John Wesley has often been charged with narrowness and intolerance. But never was there a mind more open to truth, and at the same time more tenacious of belief. He says: "I have no right to object to a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off and shakes the powder in my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible." He was broad enough not to exclude any man from the fellowship of Christ because of what that man believed. He expressed the hope that he should see the arch-heretics of Christendom, Montanus and Pelagius and Servetus, with the great pagans, Socrates and Plato and Marcus Aure-

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lius, sitting down together in the Kingdom of God. Among the religious leaders of all ages there is not one who surpasses John Wesley in true liberality in belief and in broad catholicity.

There is still another important characteristic of the preaching of John Wesley, *his spiritual passion for the salvation and service of men*. It was this which awakened in the modern world the Christ-enthusiasm for humanity which has been the inspiration of the noble philanthropies of our day. In the history of the rise to power of the common people and of the great humane movements of modern times, sufficient credit has never yet been given to John Wesley, the gospel preacher, pushing from town to town, from village to village, yea, and from house to house, preaching the good tidings of the gospel.

It was this that created a new order of common people out of the very dregs of English society, which to-day is the strength of the nation. It was this that awakened public sympathy for the oppressed and set on foot a practical ministry to the needs of society. It was his incarnation of the Christian conscience which ushered in an era of reform. The murderous

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penal laws of England were repealed. Under the inspiration of John Wesley the work of prison reform was inaugurated by John Howard. The rights of the laborer were protected by legislation. Several years before Robert Raikes, John Wesley had laid the foundation of the modern Sunday school movement. The last letter which he penned was a letter of encouragement to William Wilberforce in his struggle against the African slave trade. But this is not all. His own ministry was a masterly organized system of social service. He was the pioneer in the effort to supply the people with cheap, wholesome literature, giving to the press from his own hand three hundred and seventy-one publications, two-thirds of which sold for less than a shilling, and a quarter of which sold for a penny. He established the first dispensary; he provided a loan fund for those in temporary need; he organized Strangers' Relief Societies, which are still perpetuated by the present system of charity in England; and, above all, he gave to the modern world its missionary impulse to give the gospel of Christ to the whole world.

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Whence did this splendid ministry in the eighteenth century, with the power of God for political, social, and moral salvation, come? It was a gospel of positive doctrine, springing out of a vital Christian experience. It was a gospel of hope and salvation, preached with full knowledge of the times, with the intellectual focus and spiritual insight which put into the foreground the great outstanding facts of redemption, and into the background the petty theories and speculations of men. It was the gospel of the cross preached with Calvary's passion for men.

VI

The Preaching for the Times

THE great outstanding features in the ministry of Wesley must be reproduced in the preaching of the present-day Church. There must be in the effective preaching of this and of every age a clear, strong note of positive doctrine and of religious certainty, born of a personal experience of the things of God. Why should Mr. Begbie's "Twice-Born Men" and "Souls in Action" create such a sensation, unless there is a suspicion gnawing at the hearts of many that the gospel has lost something of its former power? Why should the new theology and doctrinal reconstruction and creed revision be so much in the air, if the note of religious authority were not lost in many a Christian pulpit? There is no concealing the fact that the confidence of a certain faith is gone out of much of our preaching.

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What has happened? We can not blind ourselves to the fact that a century of inquiry has made important changes in religious thinking. There has been a tremendous inrush of knowledge; the world has been vastly enlarged, and the religious mind has been trying to adjust itself to this roomier universe. The bounds of history have been pushed back to a time so remote as to be bewildering; the earth has been taken out of the center of the sky and set in an obscure part of the universe of worlds; a million facts which men did not know before have poured in upon us, and the minds of many are bewildered. A modern scholar has made the statement that probably more new facts regarding the physical world have been discovered in the last seventy-five years than during the previous seventy-five hundred years. Professor Wallace, in his thrilling book, "The Story of the Wonderful Century," claims that thirteen great inventions or discoveries were made during the nineteenth century, and only seven in all the centuries before.

This new knowledge which is brought to us

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by geologist and astronomer, by archæologist and biologist, has created a great disturbance in our ethical and religious values. How do these new facts relate themselves to the teaching of the Bible, to the Christian doctrine of sin, of forgiveness, of prayer, of conversion, of a Divine Savior, and of the immortal life? In the midst of the intellectual confusion and doctrinal bewilderment, be it ever remembered that not a single fact of Christian experience has been invalidated, not a single fundamental doctrine of our holy faith overthrown. But be it also remembered that fidelity to the truth preached by the fathers is one thing, and servility to the forms in which they preached it is another thing. Their forms of statement may have been the best for their day, but they are not adequate for ours. We can not force upon men's minds to-day the thumb-worn creeds of the eighteenth century. The facts of Christian experience are the same now as then; but you can not make the same appeal to men to-day that was made fifty or one hundred years ago, and carry conviction. Fidelity to the old truths,

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without servility to the old forms of truth, is the spirit in which the Church must conquer in the twentieth century.

Now, in the face of the intellectual inquiry and the prevailing religious unrest, what is the duty of the Christian minister? To study the signs of the times; to know the findings of the scholars; to welcome the truth, from whatever source it may come, in fullest confidence that the vitality of the Divine Word and the need of the human heart will safeguard the truth forever. If there is some light on the great doctrines of religion to-day which makes a stronger appeal to life, we want the larger truth in the interest of the larger life. If some new light is shed upon the Old Book by the discoveries of the archæologists or by the literary and historical study of the Bible by the scholars, we want the larger truth in the interest of the larger life. For we may be assured the cause of Christian faith is never in peril from the truth.

These changes in the intellectual outlook and in the social atmosphere have simply laid upon the Christian preacher the obligation of mediating his message to his age. To do this requires

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intellectual perspective. The preacher must set in the foreground the things which are foremost—the great essentials of Christian faith and conduct. He must estimate the religious values of all truths by their power to create and sustain in men spiritual life. The training of the schools ought to give to the Christian minister a hospitality toward all truth, a viewpoint which will make him the sympathetic teacher of his age, and give to him the insight to discriminate between the essentials and the non-essentials. His is the high task of leading the doubt-bewildered minds of men, who are confusing higher criticism with a living word of God, who substitute a theory of the atonement for a vision of the redeeming cross, and who identify the acceptance of a creed with personal loyalty to the Master. In other words, ours is the people's ancient charge to Moses of hearing for others: "Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." The prophet of God standing in the holy place to hear God's revelation, and then coming down from the mount of vision to mediate the truth and grace of God forever—that

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is the awful, the gloriously majestic function of the Christian preacher.

That is the preaching for the times. For "the freshest thing that any man can give to the world—and what the world still yearns, with an unutterable longing, to hear, is the word of God spoken in the preacher's own soul," in the language and forms of thought which men know—and this is the task of the Christian preacher. Ruskin observes that if you were to cut a square inch out of Turner's sky, you would find the Infinite in it. So, to portray real life to men, that they shall see the Infinite in it, is the supreme objective in Christian preaching.

And here emerges the great practical intellectual task of modern Christianity. The very titles of recent books on religious subjects indicate the serious conviction of religious thinkers that the truth of Christ must be translated into living thought-forms and applied to the vital needs of the present day.

A Wesleyan minister writes a book on "The Historic Christ in the Faith of To-day;" a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church sends

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out a volume on "A Valid Christianity for To-day;" "Things Fundamental" is the title of a book by an American Congregational minister; "The Gospel and the Modern Man" is from the pen of a Western college professor; a popular preacher and author has written a book on "The Gospel for An Age of Doubt;" the president of a leading theological school has published a volume on "The Social Message and the Modern Pulpit." These titles indicate the serious effort that is being made to mediate the truths of Christianity to our day. President Faunce is right: "The Puritan meeting-house in an Indian jungle would be an anomaly, but no more anomalous than the Athanasian Creed in Calcutta." Now the Athanasian Creed may be true in Calcutta, but it is not the truth in the form that will appeal to the Oriental mind. Doctor Charles Cuthbert Hall, in his "Christian Belief Interpreted by Christian Experience," well says: "He who, confident in Western tradition, ignores the differentia of Eastern thinking, and preaches Christian truth to the subtle students of Allahabad precisely in the terms to be employed at Oxford or Harvard, while he

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may interest a few who may have become Europeanized in their thinking, runs the risk of remaining unintelligible to the many whose intellectual presuppositions have almost nothing in common with his own."

What, then, is the gospel for our age? It is the gospel of the Son of God, with its essential message translated into the thought-forms of the present day. Just as the apostles preached Christianity in the vernacular of their time, so the Church to-day must seize the dominant conceptions of the age and pour its timeless truth into them. The problem of the preacher is how "to translate the things of eternity into the vocabulary of time." In other words, in the fine phrase of William Adams Brown, "The Christian spirit must make for itself a home in the existing intellectual environment of every age." The changes in men's thinking have not invalidated a single fact of Christian experience. The Christian fundamentals rise out of and are to be interpreted by the living experience of men who know God through His Son, Jesus Christ. And this may be said to be the philosophy underlying the historic creeds of

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Christendom. They are simply the intellectual effort of Christian believers to translate Christ and His message into forms of thought intelligible to their own time. Some of the creeds would undoubtedly have been unintelligible to the original twelve apostles. They are alike unmeaning to the average reader to-day; simply because we are thinking in different forms, we have a different intellectual atmosphere from the centuries in which the historic creeds of the Church were formulated. And the translation of the Christian message must go on, so long as the mind of man continues to widen its outlook and strengthen its grasp on truth.

The Church of our day needs to return to its old-time *emphasis upon the divine reality of personal Christian experience*. The scientific fad of our day applied to matters of the spirit is the old-fashioned doctrine of assurance or certainty through personal Christian experience. And it is this note of positiveness in spiritual things for which the world is waiting, and never so eagerly as now. The note of moral and spiritual authority must be heard again in the Christian Church. Men must hear from the pul-

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pit the great spiritual verities of life which command the intellect and grip the conscience. Unless this age of doubt hears a positive message which warrants believers in saying, "I know Him whom I have believed," "We know we have passed from death unto life," men will not heed our preaching. The need of our time is for a gospel that is rock-ribbed with the sublime dogmas of Christianity. And "unless a preacher knows some things with certainty and can preach them dogmatically, he has no right to preach." It is becoming increasingly evident that our age will not hear the preaching of a man who can not speak "the great truths of divine revelation in accents which do not waver, and with an emphasis which burns with fervent heat." The time-spirit calls upon the Christian minister to-day to emphasize the primacy of spiritual experience. We make a great mistake when we conclude that the people of our time want to hear only a gospel of human brotherhood and the Golden Rule. There is only one message that catches the ear and changes the heart of scholar and outcast alike, and that is Christ and Him crucified.

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Again, the opinions or speculations which have grown up around the gospel do not lend themselves to the experimental method and to positive preaching. Our theory of the atonement or of the inspiration of the Bible, and other speculations more or less valuable, can not be brought to the test of living experience. And so we do well to stress those things which appeal to living experience—the reality of the experience of twice-born men, the certainty of the divine forgiveness, Jesus Christ the perfect revelation of God to men, the word and life of Jesus Christ incarnate afresh in every generation—the one ultimate authority for Christian faith and conduct, the terrible reality and guilt of sin, the certainty of sin's punishment, the blessedness of a life of righteousness. "These are the outcroppings of the eternal granite on which the universe stands. And blessed is the preacher who plants his foot on these." This is the very heart of the gospel, and it is to-day the power of God unto salvation.

But in every age there are certain dominant conceptions which must shape the preaching of the Church. In order to give men the Living

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Bread instead of a stone, a vision of Jesus Christ instead of a theological proposition, the minister must know the trend of human thinking in his day. He must have the *Zeitgeist* on his side.

What are the ruling ideas which must shape the preaching of our day?

First: *The aliveness of the world.* The dominant idea of physical science is that there is going on everywhere a process of unfolding and development at whose very center is living intelligence and will. The whole physical world is not a dead mass of matter, but is "shot through with mind in every particle, and every atom is palpitating with energy." One idea rules in the world of nature, science, education, philanthropy, religion; that idea is an endless unfolding process. The consequence is that religious truth must not be handled as if it were a jewel to be kept in a casket, but rather as seed to be planted in faith. This will make the theology of every age a vital thing. If we can say to the eager and alert minds, gazing in wonder at the marvels of science, "You are to see still greater wonders in religion; there is to be a pro-

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gressive apprehension of God's presence in the world," then men are ready to hear. But if we try to set forth the religion of Christ in the mathematical and mechanical conceptions of an earlier day, our effort is doomed to failure, because men to-day are thinking in the terms of life and growth.

Another ruling idea of the present is *the universal dominion of law*. The very outposts of creation are claimed to be in the domain of physical law. Chance has been exiled; lawlessness everywhere is inconceivable. Men are looking for progress under universal law. And with all the riotous excess to which the idea of "the reign of law" has run, it remains true that the mightiest sanctions ever given to the moral law are found in the facts of heredity and of reversion to type. The thunderings of Sinai and the hell-fire of Dante are not so terrible as the penalty of wrong-doing which is seen to be inevitable in the poisoning of our own blood, in the corruption of our own nature, and in the telltale marks upon our children. In Emerson's phrase, "When we see crime and punishment growing out of one stem, we have conceptions

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of heaven and hell that are deepened by infinite depths." Instead of the Christian heaven being a kind of appendage to earthly goodness, it is seen to be the inevitable outcome of goodness that is growing and climbing forever. This dominant thought of our time, the universal dominion of law, can be used by the Christian preacher with tremendous force in preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

There is a third conception which dominates modern life: That is, *the practical test of truth is experience*. This is the laboratory method which prevails everywhere in the sciences. Does it work? Will it bear the test of life? These are the questions which are incessantly put to every theorist, teacher, and preacher. And this is the historic appeal of Christianity. "Come and see" was the challenge of Jesus to the first inquiries concerning His Messiahship. "Come and see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is this not the Christ?" "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God." This is the method to which our age has given its allegiance, the method of

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experiment, the laboratory test applied to spiritual things.

But far more important than the intellectual setting of the truth is *the attitude of the preacher toward his message*. Does he think of himself primarily as the exponent and defender of the doctrines of his denomination, as the interpreter of certain religious beliefs, or as the herald to the men of his day of the love and power and presence of the living God? Is it the great all-pervading conviction of his mind and heart that God lives and moves in the earth, brooding over human lives with everlasting love? The heresy of our time which is paralyzing the pulpit and deadening the pew, is the belief in the "*God that was*." The master truth which we are to preach to this age is, "Our God was and is, and is to come." In your familiar garden you may hear His voice in the cool of the day. In your fields you may see the bush that burns and is not consumed. In the faces upon which you look you may see shining the light of the glory of God. On your mountains and plains you may see the horsemen and the chariots of

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God's Israel. Over the heads of men and women in the upper room till this very day there is still to be seen the flame of fire. In the striking words of a modern thinker, "The Bible is not the story of a vanished splendor, the melancholy memorial of departed powers. It is the revelation of powers that now play about us, victories that now may be won, and a life which in every nation, every age, may be lived by faith in 'the strong Son of God—Immortal Love.' " O prophets of the truth, you are to study the temper of the time, and come forth in the presence of the Eternal Spirit with a message for every mood and for every man. You are to be citizens of two worlds. Remember, that if you are to minister to the present age your preaching must have in it the heroic note. If you would put to flight the armies of aliens you must believe profoundly in God, in the eternal meaning and consequence of every little life, in the supreme revelation of God in Jesus Christ, in the value of righteousness, and that the ideals and forces with which you have to do in your calling are to transform the lives and shape the course of humanity. To

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believe in the great realities of spiritual life with contagious conviction, and to interpret them with intellectual perspective and spiritual insight, will set the Christian prophet in the front ranks of humanity's march,

"On, on to the bounds of the waste,
On to the City of God."

Whatever the art critic may say of the execution of the sculptor's conception, that daring ideal of St. Gauden's, in his statue of Phillips Brooks in Trinity churchyard, is true to the fact in the experience of every real preacher of the everlasting gospel—the preacher is the human voice, the burning heart, the living interpreter of the mighty Christ, before whom he stands, uttering His timeless truth in the vocabulary of his time. The preacher is a man of God, speaking forth the things of God, so that they may become realities in the lives of men. It is deep answering unto deep. It is John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, with the desert-wonder in his eye. It is Paul, with the passion of the heavenly vision burning in his soul. It is Savonarola, rousing the people of

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Florence with the mighty imperatives of the gospel. It is John Wesley in England, and Phillips Brooks in Boston, making the things of the Spirit as much realities in the experience of men as the things of the street.

To sum up this whole discussion, the preaching for the times is the everlasting gospel of the Son of God, preached in the vernacular of the present day; its perennially vital truths poured into the thought-forms which will appeal with conviction to the minds of the age; its ageless message, deliverance from the power and guilt of sin by Jesus Christ, the Divine Savior; the fullness and satisfaction of spiritual life, the sure evidence of its own divineness, and this message proclaimed with a positiveness born out of the living experience of the preacher—that is the gospel for this and for every age.

VII

The Supreme Issue

THE livest problem of society to-day is the moral issue. Questions of economic and social betterment and of every form of human uplift ground on personal character. Too little account has been taken of the "economic aspect of morality." It is worth while to teach a boy to drive a nail straight; it is even more worth while to give him will-power to keep straight. It is worth while to train young men for larger wages and for economic efficiency; it is even more important to send them into the world with moral worth. "In the family, at the ballot-box, and on the market heartcraft is even more indispensable than handcraft." The supreme questions to-day are not wages, housing, labor and capital, tariff and trade. The supreme issue is moral character. To inspire and to train men

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for integrity, for moral purpose, and for spiritual passion, that is the great business of life; and any institution that contributes to that end is indispensable to the welfare of society. Conscience is discredited to-day by arrogant science and rampant commercialism. But conscience is here; it only needs to be educated and stirred. The pressure of the universe is behind it. There are windows in every human life that open heavenward. We only need to call upon men as the sons of God. We may forget the moralness of the universe, but there is a power that is ceaselessly working for righteousness far beyond our individual acts.

Lord Roseberry, in his rectoral address at the Glasgow University, said: "The first need of the country is the lack of men, first-rate men." The English statesman's estimate of conditions in the British Empire has wider application. The crying need in political life, in business, in the Church, everywhere, is for men—men whom the flattery of the crowd can not swerve from duty, whom popular clamor will not stampede, whom bribery will not buy. And such character can not be developed except as

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men are grounded on moral principle, except as they hear everlasting insistence upon the divine authority of the Ten Commandments.

Now the Church is the one institution that is teaching and trying to enforce the moral duties of life. By its worship and sacraments, by its pulpit and benevolent ministries, the Church is compelling men to bring their conduct to the approval of Almighty God. It is holding up to men the infinite verities of truth, righteousness, and eternal destiny. The one great function of the Church is to make men see the spiritual and eternal values of life.

A judge in the Supreme Court of North Carolina, in a public address, declared that it would be utterly impossible for the courts, in any adequate manner, to enforce the laws of the land but for the influence of the Church. To silence the pulpits would be to rob the courts of their power to administer justice. The *Wall Street Journal*, in setting forth the most urgent needs of the country for business prosperity and industrial thrift, made an impassioned plea for a revival of old-fashioned honesty. And what of the various reform movements which are look-

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ing toward a truer democracy and the establishment of right relations among men as neighbors? Their ideals and their only effective inspiration have come from the Christian Church. For any man in the twentieth century to say that the Church is struggling for a "dead issue," is simply to advertise a nerveless pessimism or an utter ignorance of the vital forces which are at work in modern society for the betterment of the race.

The Christian prophet flashes the warning-signals on the highways of life. He opens horizons broader than shop or market, and furnishes the ideals and motives indispensable for every occasion and for every relation in life. "His words fall on shadowed lives, and light shines again on their pathway. They strengthen wavering wills to resist temptation; they turn the faces of wayward souls heavenward in penitence;" they revive the doubting with courage. Has the time come when this moral and spiritual ministry is no longer needed? We have more science, greater wealth, finer art, better houses, and more comforts than ever before in the world's history. The educated mind and

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the trained hand are common possessions. These are the tools which are indispensable to the highest efficiency in life. But is there no one needed to encourage men harrowed by business cares, to guide the young in their struggle with doubt, to strengthen young men fighting passions fiercer than the beasts of the jungle, to cheer the poor in their hard lot, and to brace the trembling hearts of those who are passing into the valley of the shadow of death?

Surely it means something to have one institution, while claiming for its mission the authority of Heaven, dedicated to keeping alive the glow and the power of Jesus' ideals of life. To have a voice that is forever crying in the midst of rich and poor alike, that man is a citizen of heaven and can not live by bread alone, is vastly worth while. And this note of moral authority must always be heard in the pulpit. The minister can not dogmatize upon petty matters of personal conduct. The authority of the pulpit is not despotic dictation, but vital inspiration; not infallible certainty over-riding the reason, but the power of personal influence. To lead men to Him who is the Way, the Truth,

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and the Life; to show men where rest the everlasting foundations of religion; to reveal to men "the mighty sweep of moral purpose through the centuries;" to discover to men the primacy and power of the inner life, is the supreme business of the Christian Church.

Our ears are filled to-day with the hue and cry that the pulpit has lost its power. The pulpit is always a power when there is a man of power in the pulpit. What Savonarola was in Florence, John Wesley in England, Spurgeon in London, Henry Ward Beecher in New York, Phillips Brooks in Boston, every minister, according to his ability and consecration, may be in his own place. There is no decadence of the ministry in real and far-reaching influence over the lives of men. A young man listened to a sermon by Lyman Beecher on "The Sovereignty of God," hastened to his chamber, and on his knees dedicated himself to God. That was the beginning of the work of Wendell Phillips as a reformer. The humble preacher of Ecclefechan spoke for half a century through the writings of Thomas Carlyle, who said, "The mark of that man is on me." Sometimes men without vision

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stand as religious leaders; the messenger is without a message. Instead of hope and faith the people hear a whine or a wail; instead of self-forgetful service there is at times worldly self-seeking. But for men of vision, of trained intellect, of burning heart, with a passion to serve their fellows, with a message from God, spoken in the language of to-day, there is a hearing, there is a field for useful service, there is an immortality of honor—and never greater than now.

But if the minister is to be a mere phonograph of ancient dogmas, or the administrator of petty ecclesiastical affairs, or if he has no "Thus saith the Lord" for his generation, he is indeed struggling for a dead issue, and is in a decadent profession. Moreover, if the great, all-pervading conviction of his mind is that God lives and moves in the earth, brooding over human lives with everlasting love, his message is vital. If he is indeed a prophet of the truth, who has the *Zeitgeist* on his side, who is a citizen of two worlds, who studies the temper of his time and comes forth in the presence of the Eternal Spirit with a message for every mood and for every man, his work is indispensable,

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his task is fascinating and glorious. For, after all, the mightiest forces at work in the world for human advancement are our moral ideals and spiritual impulses. These determine the course of civilization, the development of trade, the policies of State, and the safety and happiness of society.

VIII

The Apostolic Task and its Reaction

IF the contention of the preceding chapters has been sustained, this is not a bad day for religion. It is a fact that Christian faith makes for the more joyous and effective living of life. The truth of Christianity works, and its vindication everywhere is, that in the final outcome it is the only thing that will work. Life becomes more livable, more enjoyable, and more effective when it is caught up in a great confidence in Divine Providence. Life is more inspiring and courageous when we believe that prayer accomplishes something. Life becomes more heroic when we live it by the power of an endless life. The Bible is meeting the vital needs of human life with exhaustless spiritual resources. Philosophers and sages, saints and scholars bear their reverent testimony—"One is our Master,

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even Christ." The Church represents the spiritual part of humanity expressing itself in its search for God, and for truth, and for the fountains of eternal hope and comfort. And in this quest for God, regenerated, consecrated men are still appearing with the announcement, "Ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake." The very foundation of our life and the source of our strength are in moral character and spiritual experience, inspired and nurtured by the Christian Church. The final vindication of our holy faith is that it makes, and makes mightily, for rich and victorious life.

What, then, is the outlook for the Christian faith? The outlook for the Christian faith depends upon our inlook into the life eternal, and our obedience to the will of Christ. There is a profound philosophy in the great commission of Christ. In that supreme moment on Olivet, when He gave to The Twelve the vision of coming power, He pointed to the ends of the earth. "When ye have received power from on high ye shall be witnesses unto Me, beginning at Jerusalem and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The power from on high was for their

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world-wide gospeling; but not until their feet had stood in the ends of the earth would they realize the supreme energy of the Divine Spirit. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and lo, I am with you always." It is a divine command. But it is more. It is the statement of this profound truth—the largest realization of the presence of Christ is in the widest fulfillment of the command of Christ. In other words, there is an inevitable reaction of the mission of the Church upon the experience of the Church, of the work of the Christian upon the life of the Christian. The expansion of Christianity is absolutely essential to the vitality of Christianity. Just in proportion as our Christian activity widens, our Christian experience deepens and strengthens. We can not keep the unsearchable riches of Christ unless we give them forth to the world. There is an essential relation between Paul's mission to the Gentiles and his conversion. His conversion had in it the potential energy of his far-off mission. His mission, in turn, fully developed the latent possibilities of his conversion. He does not wait in Damascus until the mystery of his

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new experience has been fathomed. He leaves Antioch for Asia Minor before his theology is fully developed. He moves westward into Europe before the Churches of Asia have been grounded in the faith. This possessor of the unsearchable riches of Christ, his own vast wealth not yet explored, is eager to preach Christ to the world. And in this larger ministry he appropriates ever more and more completely the treasures of the gospel. The widest mission of the Christian gives vitality and enlargement and strength to Christian experience.

This is a truth with which we are perfectly familiar in other spheres of life. Take the matter of citizenship. The man who is most active in the promotion of good citizenship and is most earnest in his efforts for the welfare of his fellow-citizens, realizes most largely the meaning and the glory of citizenship. In the world of art the more the artist tries to make the beautiful the possession of his fellows, the more deeply does he enter into the very soul of the beautiful. This truth has long been a commonplace in the field of learning. The more widely you extend any knowledge you possess, the more completely

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you become its master. The missionary idea lies at the heart of our science and art and politics. It is a law of life that expansion always reacts upon inner development. The more you do, the more you are able to know. The wider your activity, the richer your character.

How does the aggressive effort to spread the gospel influence Christian character? First of all, it gives us a truer appreciation of Jesus Christ. Every day of the world's history is compelling stronger conviction of the unique character of our Lord, and of the matchless worth of His teachings. The popular cry, "Back to Christ" for theology, for laws of right conduct, and for light upon the problems of life, is only the assertion of the faith of mankind in the solitary grandeur of Jesus as a teacher of religion. As Professor Harnack has said, "For the man of the twentieth century it is either Christ's God or none." But how is Christ's God to become ours? How is the purity of Christian doctrine safeguarded from one generation to another? Certainly not by forcing the words of Jesus into hard-and-fast dogma. Certainly never by ecclesiastical threats. The his-

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tory of the Church bears witness that the greatest factor in preserving the faith of the fathers is the missionary spirit. In his "Gospel for An Age of Doubt," Doctor Van Dyke has pointed out how the missionary enterprise has kept alive the vital truths of Christianity. In the Dark Ages it was through the missionary zeal of St. Augustine and St. Patrick and Colomba and Boniface that the gospel was kept pure. In the Middle Ages again the great missionary orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic preserved to the world the true faith of Christ. And after the Reformation, when spiritual faith had declined, when Churchmen wrangled over barren dogmas, when infidelity and godlessness held sway both in Europe and America, it was the revival of the Wesleys and the missionary movement of the last century that brought to light again the simplicity of the gospel. The effort to preach the gospel to every creature in the world has always separated the chaff of human speculation from the kernel of divine truth. We can not conquer the great sins of the day and the superstitions of pagan peoples with an abstraction. The practical demand for a gospel that

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is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes, has saved the gospel.

Further, the missionary enterprise has given the Church its mightiest apologetic. We sometimes wonder if Christianity can stand the critical investigation of the human intellect. The very foundations of the Christian Church are being questioned. More important than all the modern defenses of the faith is the evidence of the missionary. We witness to-day the gospel going into slums and prisons with regenerating power. We see it on the native soil of the great ethnic faiths which are declining, in the midst of "the stagnant calm of arrested civilizations," making converts by the hundred thousand. From every continent and from the farthest islands of the sea, from every tribe and race of men there comes back the testimony, "He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto Him." Here is an unanswerable argument for the divineness of our faith. The work of the philosopher and the theologian is important. But there is no strong, vital belief in the divinity and sovereignty of Jesus Christ possible, based solely on metaphysical theories and Scrip-

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ture proof-texts. When the testimony of men saved, renewed, and sanctified comes from every nation and kindred and tongue, the foundation of the Christian faith stands sure, in spite of skeptical cavil. You can not invalidate an experience with a theory. A fact is more conclusive than an interrogation. To see nations coming to the brightness of His rising, to see the gospel meeting the great moral needs of every condition of human society to-day, puts a higher note of certainty into the Christian Church. No destructive criticism can invalidate the testimony of the ten thousand white-souled martyrs of China.

How strikingly is the contention that the missionary enterprise develops a truer appreciation of Christ supported by the life of Paul. When did his masterly utterances concerning Christ and Christian experience appear? Not at the beginning of his apostolate. His most exalted utterances were those written toward the close of his missionary career. There is beyond all question a profounder insight into spiritual truth, a firmer grasp upon spiritual verities, and a brighter vision of the glory of God

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in the face of Jesus Christ, in the epistles of the Romans and Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, than in the First and Second Thessalonians. And the difference is not one of intellectual development alone. It is that sight of the soul, it is that vision of the Eternal, that can come only to the man whose life is lived to make all men see the mystery of the gospel.

The most fruitful periods in the development of Christian doctrine have been the missionary epochs of the Church. It is no mere coincidence that the greatest theologians of the Church have been contemporary with the great missionaries. The man who leads us most deeply into the secret of the Lord is not the closet speculator, but he who is most active in the spread of the gospel. The man who sees is the man who does. The man who knows the truth is the man who lives the life. It may be said that our faulty characters and our meager achievements are negative evidences of the fact that the revelation of Christ to the world has not closed. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared

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for those that love Him.” This is a prophecy not of heavenly glories, but of the unpictured revelations of God to His obedient children on the earth. We are to be guided into all the truth. But if we are ever to be liberated by the truth of Christ, if we are ever to appropriate His thought, if His language ever becomes our vernacular, if we are ever to know Him with that knowledge which is eternal life, we must throw ourselves into a supreme effort to make Him known to the whole world. The spirit of out-reaching service, limited only by the out-posts of human need, will alone reveal to us the mind of the Master.

There is still another element in the reaction of the missionary task upon Christian life. The effort to make Christ known to all men realizes the fullest development of Christian character. Napoleon said, “He who does not attack and plunge his standard into the thick of the enemy’s ranks must soon pull down his flag.” This is the law of all higher progress. Whenever the people of God have deserted their mission to the world, material decline and moral retrogression have always followed. Read the story of an-

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cient Israel. The great leaders and prophets of the Hebrew people always held before the nation their unique calling, their mission to the world. And under the inspiration of this idea of a world-relation for missionary service, the growth of the nation in political power and moral influence is without a parallel in history. Doctor A. B. Davidson, in his book on "Old Testament Prophecy," points out with great force the missionary destiny of the Hebrew people. They were intended to be the missionaries to the world at large, their calling was to evangelize the nations of the earth. "Nations shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising," was Judaism's prophetic destiny. But how tragically the nation failed! Her refusal to be a light to the Gentiles was the forfeiture of her destiny. The people became absorbed in their own peculiar privileges. They clung to the idea of election; they lost the idea of service. Political selfishness and spiritual pride ruled them. Pharisaism and Sadduceeism were born. They became a nation of priests instead of prophets, of scribes instead of missionaries. So long as the nation cherished her

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ideal of lightening the world, Judaism was a resistless power. But the loss of her missionary impulse was the decline of her political power and her noble character. The doom of Judaism was the forsaking of her mission to the Gentile world.

In the history of the nations this fact is written in letters of living light, that the nation that turns the stream of its activity upon itself is doomed to decline. Three centuries ago Spain was the imperial power of the Western world. To-day all her greatness is gone. Then the grandest opportunity for missionary service before any nation of the modern world. But Spain disowned the missionary idea of civilization, and this is the price. The nations representing the Anglo-Saxon race which stand in the forefront in power and influence in the world to-day are the ones that have accepted the missionary idea of civilization. In his "Principles of Western Civilization," Mr. Kidd contends that the races and nations which hold the seats of power and influence in modern times are those which have followed what he calls the principle of projected efficiency, or the service of the future instead of the service of the present.

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This is simply the utterance in specific terms of the fundamental law of all spiritual progress—in order to keep any treasure for ourselves we must use it for the world.

We have a striking illustration of this truth in New England Puritanism. It shows the inevitable loss to inward life that comes from repressing missionary activity. Puritanism in New England had an avowed religious purpose. As Phillips Brooks has said, "Our Puritan fathers were deeply and overwhelmingly religious. But the movement had but little missionary zeal. Their chief concern was the nurture of their own faith and making strong their own institutions." The decline of Puritanism began with the loss of missionary zeal. Puritanism, once a mighty moral and spiritual force, degenerated into a barren speculation in theology, and into a fussy conscientiousness, creating petty rules for conduct. Heresies were rife. Spiritual depression prevailed. There was no enthusiasm in worship, no large hopefulness in service. Puritanism, by turning the stream of her effort in upon herself, checked the tides of her own spiritual life.

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But a new Puritanism was born. It was when the students of Williamstown behind the haystack knelt before God, consecrating themselves to the spread of the gospel. This was the beginning of the reawakening of the deep moral convictions and the mighty spiritual enthusiasms of early Puritanism. New life came to the Churches of New England when they began to make Christ known to the world. Whenever the Church resolves itself into a close corporation it becomes a bankrupt in spiritual power.

No fact, then, is more certain than this: that in the life of nations, of civilizations, and of religious movements, vitality and strength depend upon expansion. The missionary idea lies at the very heart of the progress of our higher life.

But an even more practical illustration of the reaction of Christian missions upon Christian character is found in our personal religious life. We have an experience of Christ's wonderful salvation. For what? Not merely to get us into heaven, but to make every saved man a "point of radiant light and power," for making

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Christ known to other men. Christian faith is not a kind of insurance policy which is good for two worlds. It is a holy privilege out of which rises a high obligation.

Whenever religious experience aims solely at its own self-culture it degenerates into selfishness and littleness. No man is to be more pitied, and none deserves to be more unsparingly rebuked than he who is trying only to save his own soul, and doing nothing for the spread of the gospel. What we need to redeem our life from the petty trifles and the peddling littleness which are often the peculiar temptation of religious people, is to crusade for some cause whose very greatness is impressive, even impossible to all but men of Christian faith. Think of the cosmopolitan largeness of the missionary enterprise; an ideal for human life so sublime that it could have originated only in the mind of the Eternal Christ; a cause that will broaden our sympathy so as to take in every man; a cause at once so noble and so difficult as to call forth the love of Christ and the heroism of the cross. Now, it is when a man bows beneath the great tasks of the Infinite God that

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he rises up in the strength of gianthood. A man embodies the character of the cause which he serves. Gladstone was one of the noblest figures of English history. But the greatness of the cause which he served made him the grand old man of England. Lincoln was great. But it was the greatness of the cause which he served that made him the first American. Paul the missionary is richer in his character than Paul the evangelist of Antioch. Take upon your heart the largeness of apostolic Christianity, and you will grow into the largeness of apostolic character. Theodore Parker once said that if all that had ever been given to missions had produced only one such character as Adoniram Judson, it would have been worth the expenditure. Set before a man a work so sublime in its conception, so vast in its scope, so divine in its obligation, so difficult in its execution, and all the greatness in our human nature is called forth. Is it any wonder that the missionary enterprise has enrolled the tallest knights of the centuries, the mightiest men of God? Paul and Livingstone, Carey and Judson, Morrison and Butler are among the immortals.

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Now if this contention is true, the missionary enterprise is the most potent factor in meeting the supreme need of the Christian Church to-day. Where is the weakest place in the Christian forces of the twentieth century? Not in our material wealth, for that we are counting by scores of millions; not in organization, for that is complete; not in doctrine, for that is more rational and more Scriptural than ever before. Our weakness is in the narrowness and selfishness of Christian character. We are in danger of losing the lofty enthusiasm of the Spirit, and of becoming low-toned in aspiration and unheroic in effort and sordid in ambition. And nothing can save us from this except the romance and the heroism of foreign missions. Follow the apostolic program of Christianity, and apostolic character is the result.

This being true, the obligation to carry Christ's love to all men is put on a higher plane than we commonly think. We have been urged to give the gospel to the unconverted because men are lost to the highest life without Christ. We have looked upon the awful miseries, the wretched degradations, the appalling sins, and

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the blind despair of pagan peoples, and our pity has been moved. Human need does appeal mightily to our nobler sentiment for help. But our brother's need for the gospel is matched by the gospel's need for our brother. Rob Christianity of its missionary spirit, and it is a weakened and mangled thing—a body of doctrine without vital power, a system of morals without spiritual force, a set of ceremonies without inspiration for worship or duty. There is no genuine Christianity that is not essentially missionary. There is no distinction between the missionary spirit and the Christian spirit. The missionary zeal of the Christian Church is not a wave of exceptional devotion. It is rather something essential to Christianity. The vitality of our own faith and the perfection of our Christian character call upon us to preach the gospel to every creature.

In the light of this truth, the evangelization of the world takes on a larger meaning. It means more than supplanting pagan civilization by Christian. It is more than the opportunity for every man to believe in Jesus Christ. It means a more stalwart race of Christians, with

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a more vital faith, richer in experience, and liker to Christ in character. When we claim the whole world for Christ, we really claim the whole Christ for ourselves. It becomes true for us that

"The light that shines farthest
Shines brightest nearest home."

J. S. A. 9-6-13

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